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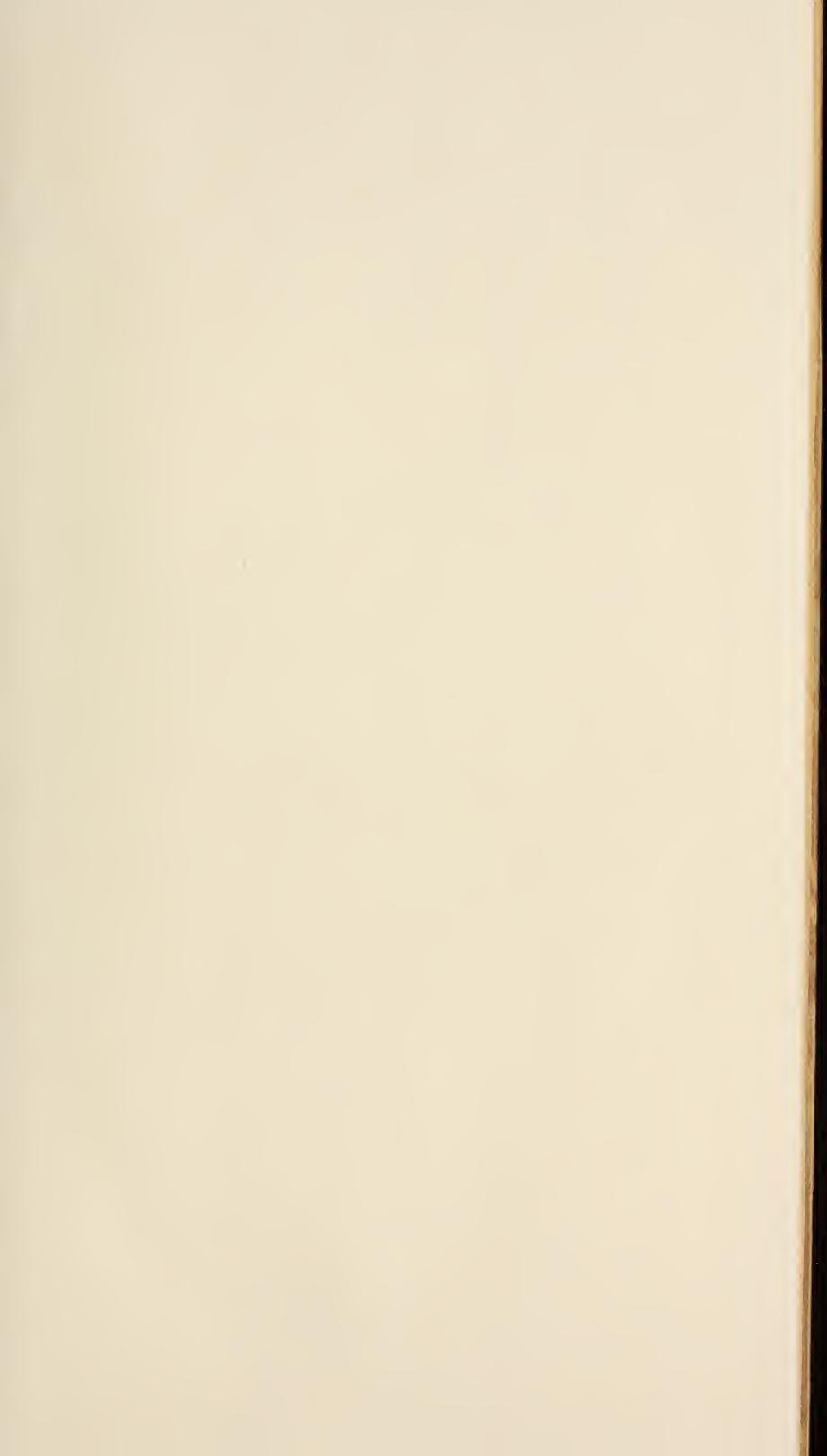


















This little pamphlet, the production of a beloved relative, now deceased, has been printed by the undersigned, for the use of the regiments in the field, from the State of New York, with the hope that it may prove acceptable to those who are risking their lives in their country's service.

E. D. MORGAN.

ALBANY, *February*, 1862.

# RUIN AND RESTORATION;

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE

## PARABLE

OF THE

# PRODIGAL SON.

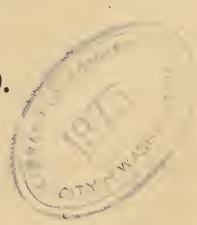
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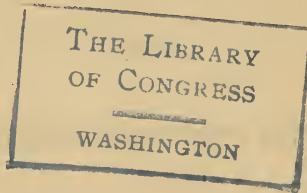


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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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WHEN an individual ventures to present the productions of his pen to the public, apology is hardly admissible. The public may inquire, why do you crave our ear if you have nothing of importance to communicate? Or if crudeness and imperfections of style be the point for which indulgence is sought, they may say with truth, why do you not correct these imperfections before you ask a place for your book among the literature of the day? Books should be models, and not apology-seekers. But there are circumstances where apology is due, both to the author's own reputation and to the reading community, and where a simple statement of facts will, of itself, dispose the reader to overlook blemishes that he might otherwise censure with just severity. These lectures now offered to the public—especially to the young—are the work of the last few months of ministerial life, prepared and delivered under the infirmities of the last stages of pulmonary disease. They were intended for the youth of the author's congregation, without reference to any ultimate purpose of publication. At the close of the series, the request was generally made that they should be put in a more permanent form, as a memento or legacy from the pastor to the youth of his congregation. Under the impression that he had strength yet remaining to revise them, and, in many respects, essentially change their character, the author made arrangements for their publication. But the rapid advance of disease has prevented him from accomplishing that purpose, and he is compelled to send them forth in precisely the form in which they were originally written and delivered, containing, as he is sensible,



many things that, though admissible in a familiar lecture, may be regarded by some as better omitted in a book, but which cannot be expunged without an indiscriminate mutilation, to which the author is unwilling to submit. Beside, it is doubtless true, that substance may be sacrificed to sound, and an idea diminished in its force, or obscured by being clothed in feeble though elegant language. While vulgarity and low provincial phrases admit of no excuse, yet there is a certain class of plain Saxon words, in common use, which sometimes express a thought with greater force than those which a highly refined taste would regard as more chaste and beautiful.

We should consider, also, that the public taste is not formed upon a fixed model; but what would be considered as a defect by one, would be regarded as an excellence by another; and a book that is addressed to youth, with the expectation of being read by them, must speak in accordance with *their* tastes and mental habits. For this reason, the author prefers submitting it to the public as it is, rather than to attempt anything less than the complete renovation designed when its publication was first contemplated.

## INTRODUCTORY.

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PARABLES are designed to convey important instruction, in a simple, attractive and impressive manner. It was a mode of teaching commonly practised in the earlier ages of the world. The advantages which they possess over other methods of instruction are obvious. They fix the attention, without which neither the mind nor the heart can be impressed. They are easily comprehended; it requires no analysis, nor even a nice faculty of discrimination, to perceive their point or force. They disarm prejudice. Thus, under the garb of a pleasing fiction, they often inflict the most dreadful stings upon the conscience.

An illustration of this is found in the parable which Nathan propounded to David. Here the prophet supposed a case of injustice, precisely parallel to the crime which David had committed, and asked his opinion, as a just ruler, of such a case of iniquity. David immediately replied, that it was worthy of death. Then the prophet turned upon him with the withering rebuke, "Thou art the man."

Many rules have been given by able commentators for the interpretation of parables; but probably no better rule can be adopted than that which is suggested by the exercise of plain, practical common sense; understanding, however, that parables always convey some spiritual truth under the guise of a narrative or allegory, therefore there must necessarily be some things which are introduced merely to give connection to the different parts, and consistency to the whole. The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates many important truths, with a force and vividness which

could not have been attained by any other method. Truths that are interspersed throughout the whole volume of inspiration, are here grouped together and applied, so naturally and so symmetrically, that they touch the sympathies of the heart. We see in imagination different actors, and the various scenes described with such vividness, that we can hardly divest ourselves of the idea that they are real.

The most striking points presented to the mind are: The waywardness or folly of youth; the consequences of improvidence; the exercises of heart experienced by a penitent; the disposition of God toward the humble; the joy of holy beings at the conversion of a sinner. These are the leading topics to which I shall direct your attention in the succeeding lectures; using the parable as the basis of my remarks, and referring to it for the purpose of illustrating such truths as may be presented.



# RUIN AND RESTORATION.

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## 1. WAYWARDNESS OF YOUTH.

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AND HE SAID, A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS: AND THE YOUNGER OF THEM SAID TO HIS FATHER, FATHER, GIVE ME THE PORTION OF GOODS THAT FALLETH TO ME. AND HE DIVIDED UNTO THEM HIS LIVING. AND NOT MANY DAYS AFTER, THE YOUNGER SON GATHERED ALL TOGETHER, AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY INTO A FAR COUNTRY, AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 11, 12, 13.*

IT WAS customary among the Romans and Phœnicians, when a son came to a certain age, for the father to give him a share of his property; and if the father neglected, or refused to comply with his custom, the son could appeal to the civil tribunal, and obtain it as a right. It is possible that some such practice existed among the Jews; though it had not the sanction of law, and that this incident in the parable only refers to a transaction that was of frequent occurrence among them.

How naturally does this opening scene represent the feelings of many young men as they enter the great world of toil and pleasure! Doubtless this young man imagined that the road to wealth and honor was open before him, and that he need only to obtain his patrimony, or that portion of his father's property, which would fall to him by inheritance, in order to enter at once and successfully upon his career.

The *next step* that we observe in his history, is, that, having obtained the object desired, either in money, or in something

equally valuable, he sought to remove himself from the observation of his father. He probably possessed a spirit of wild adventure, not uncommon at the present day; and that he might not be embarrassed, or restrained by any consideration of a filial nature, he gathered all together and took his journey into a far country. We should judge that he did not appreciate the value of good counsel, or the experience of one who might have saved him many bitter hours of remorse, when he had learned the folly of his course by his own unhappy experience. The consequences of this self-sufficient, reckless spirit, were such as we should anticipate. He soon dissipated his fortune in riotous living; probably indulging in all the pleasures and vices of the day and age, which doubtless were in many respects, identically the same as those that ruin, temporally and spiritually, so many of the youth of our own day.

The character of this young man may be taken as the type or representative of a large class, as they enter upon mature life. Waywardness is a characteristic of youth; and in the use of this term, I restrict myself to what the word literally signifies. It is liking our own way, and liking it so well as to be unwilling to profit by the experience of others. You cannot then charge me with unkindness, or uncharitableness, when I say, that it is characteristic of every youth of either sex, to be impatient of restraint; especially when they arrive at that age where it is proper for them to begin to think and act for themselves. Perhaps some whom I address have already felt the restraints of paternal authority irksome, and a strong desire to break away from their bondage, that they may follow out the fancies of a young and ardent imagination. If this be true, let me invite your particular attention to the subject before us, while I shall attempt to show you the cause of this feeling, and to point out the consequences of indulgence.

I. The first topic which I shall notice, as a cause of this disposition, is that WANT OF EXPERIENCE which is incident to youth. We enter life with no knowledge of what life is. It is only from our own observation and experience that we ever

arrive at just conclusions respecting ourselves and others; or that we can estimate properly our true position in the world. We are liable to be deceived by external appearances, and it is often the case that nothing but a painful experience in our own lives will dissipate the delusion. Consequently when the mind becomes somewhat matured, however much it may have been cultivated by education or endowed with natural gifts, yet, from the circumstances of the case, it can never have acquired that kind of knowledge which is necessary to struggle successfully with the great world of sin and temptation, of falsehood and deception.

The youthful mind is confiding, ingenuous and easily misled, in relation to those matters which affect its happiness here and hereafter; and there is a certain kind of painful experience, which must be acquired before we can properly appreciate the depravity of mankind, or understand the deceitfulness, selfishness and, in some cases, the malignity of the human heart. The child that has been tenderly watched and carefully screened from all contact with vice, who has had every want anticipated by parental solicitude, has little idea of the struggles, mortifications and defeats which attend a conflict with experienced and artful men and with the great world upon which he has entered. Caressed and flattered as he has been, his innate vanity is fed, until he imagines that he can grapple at once and successfully with men and circumstances; and he only learns by a bitter, or perhaps, like that of the young prodigal, a ruinous experience, how wofully he has been mistaken in his estimate of himself and others.

Without doubt a fatal error is often committed in the training of children. They are carefully guarded against the influence of temptation. The nature, even, of those temptations to which they will necessarily be exposed, and the various arts and blandishments which the tempter will assume, are all concealed from their knowledge, lest these should contaminate the mind, until they arrive at the age where they must begin to act for themselves; and then they are thrust out into the world, with the stature and appearance of men, but with the simplicity and

inexperience of children. No wonder that children, reared in this way, fall an easy prey to the artful and the vicious. They have not that kind of knowledge which is necessary to guard them against the first insidious influence of temptation, and before such an individual is aware of his danger he has fallen into a deadly snare. His self-respect and the respect of his friends are lost, his power of resistance weakened, and he abandons himself to his imagined fate. Every one wonders how a youth so carefully raised, and so well instructed, should turn out so miserably. But the reason is plain enough. The radical error has been that, while the intellect was well stored and the moral faculties were cultivated to a high degree, yet they have been developed without the influence of temptation; consequently the power of resistance has lain dormant. The temptations are those incident to manhood, and the power of resistance only equal to that of childhood. The cultivation of this power is a very necessary part of the education of every youth. It is something which cannot be acquired in the church or in the Sabbath school, or by any other means than by contact with the world. Dangerous as the experiment may be, yet we should remember that it is in this world, with all its vices and temptations, and under all manner of evil influences, that we are to live, and that our characters are to be developed; and the earlier we learn to resist evil and overcome temptation, the stronger will be our power of resistance.

Beside, the danger is really less to a child who begins to resist the temptations incident to childhood, and then develops this power with his character, than to the young man who is exposed to all the temptations of manhood, with the experience of a child. This is like taking the plants from your hot-house and exposing them at once to the power of the elements. Their roots are too superficial, and their structure altogether too delicate to resist the action of the sun, wind, rain and cold. This is forcibly illustrated by a simple incident which occurred under my observation. As I was walking through the fields, in a meditative mood, my attention was arrested by notes of wild agony that issued from a hedge which bordered upon my path.



I approached to learn the cause of this distress, and discovered a little bird, hardly fledged, which had probably become impatient of the narrow limits to which maternal solicitude had confined it, and, unconscious of danger, was vainly attempting to mount in its natural element; but each successive effort brought it nearer the ground. I looked still further, to discover the nest, that I might return the truant to its home, and my eyes rested upon a huge black cat, which was intently watching the course of his intended victim; and the scream of agony that had attracted my attention was the cry of its anxious mother, who had discovered the danger of her child, and was vainly sounding her note of alarm. Moved with pity, I drove away the feline enemy and placed the little truant in its nest. But it was all in vain. It had caught a glimpse of the great world without and could no longer endure the restraints of home. And it is, and always has been, my deliberate opinion that it fell a victim to the stealthy mouser who had already marked it for its prey, destroyed by its own waywardness. Forcibly does this trifling incident illustrate the conduct of many, who, without experience, rush out into the great world of wickedness and fall early victims to an enemy more relentless than any that have power only to kill the body. Like this silly bird, they think they can soar above every danger, and find themselves suddenly precipitated to the depths of disgrace and ruin.

II. Another fruitful source of waywardness is the FALSE IMPRESSIONS THAT ARE MADE BY READING FICTITIOUS BOOKS.

Of course I cannot attempt, in this connection, to portray the manifold evils that result from obtaining our first impressions of life from works of romance, in which heroes throw about purses of gold as though it were literally trash, and heroines suffer martyrdom for their constancy; or, in which highwaymen are extolled as models of honor, and licentious profligates are invested with all the attractions of refinement. Works in which religion is shown only in the light of ridicule, and the subtle poison of infidelity is instilled into the mind in the guise of religion.



It is not denied that there are works of fiction which constitute a part of our standard literature, and which are not only safe, but in many respects profitable, to those whose education is advanced, and who have acquired some knowledge of life from experience. But these are not the works sought and devoured by the juvenile novel reader, who requires something that feeds an imagination already too exuberant. Tales of love and murder, or both, are such as charm the minds of the young. It is evident that characters and opinions formed under such tutelage as this, cannot recover from its influence, until experience has shown how utterly false these notions are, and how different the world of romance is from the world of reality. The young lady who has obtained her notions of married life from the heroines of romance, is poorly qualified to fill the place of wife and mother. And most likely her husband will be driven to evil practices and evil associates, because she prefers to imagine herself a heroine, or to spend her time poring over a silly novel, to making her house comfortable and herself agreeable.

Perhaps young ladies will think that I am traveling out of the record, as the lawyers say, but I cannot forbear here remarking, that a husband is eminently a domestic animal; and nothing will make him so tame, so gentle, and so docile, as a good supper, a pleasant, clean fireside, with an easy chair on one hand, and an agreeable wife on the other. This will do more in securing any little private end of their own, than all the eloquence of a tongue as gifted as the renowned Mrs. Caudle, or that all the tears and hysterics, which are made so effective in novels. But if young ladies prefer to imbue their minds with all the silly trash uttered by feeble-minded men and romantic spinsters, to learning how to perform the practical duties of their position, they will suffer the consequences. A man of sense marries for the comforts of a home, and the society of a companion who will make herself agreeable; and if disappointed in this, he feels that all which renders life valuable, is denied him. And when, from any cause, home ceases to be attractive to a man, his ruin is almost certain.

The influence which these false impressions have, in determining the character and fate of the youth of both sexes, is far greater than is generally imagined. They form the taste and mental habits of thousands, who are insensible of it themselves; and, for this reason, the extent of the injury can never be appreciated. After the mental habits are formed, and experience is gained, the danger from this source is comparatively trifling. But before the character is confirmed, and while the mind is profoundly ignorant of the world and the realities of life, then to have it preoccupied with these false impressions is almost necessarily fatal to its sound development.

### III. Another cause of waywardness is A MISTAKEN VIEW OF HAPPINESS.

It takes a long experience of the deceitfulness of earthly pleasure to convince the mind that true happiness consists more in contentment with our present condition, than in anticipations that perhaps will never be realized. Youth is the period when the imagination is most active; and it is natural for the young mind to picture scenes of pleasure from the possession of wealth, which are dissipated when the object is attained. We can learn, by experience only, that whatever may be the degree of our success, there are as many new wants created by a change of circumstances, as those that sufficed to fill the imagination of youth; and that the craving of the soul for happiness is just as far from being allayed. It is hard, nay almost impossible, to convince the young that what we tell them, and what the Word of God tells them, of the nature of earthly hopes and earthly joys is true. They imagine, that, because we have lost some of the susceptibilities of youth for this kind of pleasure, we have become misanthropic and uncharitable in our feelings toward them. Suppose that we admit the charge to be true, what does it prove, except that by a greater experience we have discovered their true nature and influence, and that if we have drank of the cup of pleasure we have also tasted its dregs. If these things were capable of affording substantial happiness, we should never have tired of them; for, to happiness we all aspire. This fact, then, is of itself equal to a volume of instruction upon a

subject that cannot be learned except by experience. The young know, from their own innate desires, what kind of pleasure is most congenial to their tastes; but they do not know, from this source, the unhappy consequences which are sure to follow indulgence. From the joyousness of their own hearts they are disposed to enter upon the pleasures of the world with a wild recklessness of consequences, until, by their own experience, they learn that

"Each pleasure hath its poison too,  
And every sweet a snare."

If they would be warned by the observation and experience of others, many hours of remorse and many tears of anguish would be averted; for there is a happiness in the world that brings no remorse, to be obtained only by a life of virtue.

But let us notice the next step in the career of this prodigal son. *He* was in the pursuit of happiness; and, as I have already remarked, his ideas on this subject, and those of his father, probably did not correspond; therefore, he resolved to remove himself to such a distance as would enable him to pursue his own course, without fear or restraint. At the present day it is nothing uncommon, or censurable, for young men to leave their native town or state, to find in newer or more enterprising settlements those facilities for business which cannot be obtained elsewhere. This, then, of itself, is no evidence of a wrong state of heart; on the contrary, it is often indicative of an energetic and enterprising spirit. But in the country in which he lived, the case was different. Then, as they do now, families and tribes resided together, or contiguous to each other; and the father was respected by children and children's children as the patriarchal head: therefore, in this particular case, we can form no more charitable conclusion than that his object in removing to a far country was to break away, not only from his parent, but from all the social influences which surrounded him.

His father appears to have been a man of wealth and influence, probably a man of piety; and the situation of the son was relatively, much like that of a young man at the present day,

who has been educated in the Sabbath school and habitually brought to the sanctuary; and who knows, that wherever he goes, or whatever he does, there is one who is observing all his course with the deepest interest. Such might have been the condition of this youth, so far as circumstances will allow of a parallel. The restraints of home were irksome to him; he longed for different associates and for pleasures of a different character from those which he had found under his father's roof; consequently, the first step which he took in the accomplishment of his end was the one already noticed, breaking away from these restraints. The second, and the determining one which sealed his fate, was the character of the associations that he formed. This, I repeat, was the first fatal step that ensured his ruin. Previous errors might have been retrieved. Whatever mischief had been done, might have been undone. But, when he threw himself into the society of the vile and abandoned, he committed an error from which there was no recovery. Young men when they choose their associates, have very little idea of the influence which these will have upon their future career. When an individual enters a new place, especially if it be a large city, without acquaintances, and without even a character as yet established, it requires time and patience to gain access to refined circles. There is an ordeal or probationary state, through which he must pass, before the doors of good society will be thrown open to him. It is not those whose acquaintance is most accessible, whose friendship is most to be desired; on the contrary, we should regard them with suspicion; for the society of the low and vicious is always easy of access; while the doors of the virtuous, the educated and refined, sometimes seem literally barred against the young man who is struggling with the world single handed. And often, under such circumstances, he feels himself alone in the great world of excitement. He thinks of the society of home, the associates of his youth, and there comes over his spirit a feeling of solitariness and sadness which disposes him to receive with gratitude, the advances of almost any one, who assumes the



appearance of friendship. Thus a powerful temptation, to one of strong social feelings, is placed before him to form associations which will most certainly exclude him from the society that he desires. If he yields to this temptation, he becomes known, if known at all, as one of that class; for it is an old maxim that, "a man is known by the company he keeps;" hence, by a self-created necessity, he is thrown out of the pale of good society, and into that of the low and profligate. Men will not take a viper into their bosoms, nor anything that comes from its vile nest; nor will they introduce a profligate young man, or one who keeps company with profligates, into their family circles.

Young men often mistake the views and motives of those who seem to be so exclusive in their habits. They imagine that it is the influence of pride; when in fact it is only a barrier or safeguard, which the virtuous must erect and guard with jealous care, if they would preserve themselves and their families from the blighting influence of vice. For it will creep even into the sacred precincts of the family circle, sometimes withering by its touch, the fairest rose that blossoms there. And often under the external appearance of haughtiness and pride, there is as much real kindness, and far more refinement than you will find in the breast of the low and vulgar, to say nothing of the vicious. Education and habits have much to do in regulating the mode in which the feelings are expressed, and a familiar address that dispenses with all ceremony, while it is a sure indication of vulgarity, is not always indicative of better feelings than those that are expressed in a more formal and polished manner.

There is, it is true, in all large places, a society based upon wealth, where the only recommendation necessary is money; but this is not the kind that a young man commencing life, and dependent upon his own resources, should seek. If he does, he will probably be ruined by extravagance. There is also a society composed of the virtuous, the educated, and of those who are rich enough to command all the elegancies that characterize refined society anywhere, which is accessible to

any young man of character who has education and refinement enough to appreciate its worth. And associations of this kind will materially advance a young man's prospects in life. His rule should be to form no connections, and to have no associates, until he can make those that will be of advantage to him.

If the influence of bad associates extended no further than to exclude the individual from good society, this, though a great misfortune, might not be fatal, but its danger and its curse is, its corrupting influence upon the mind and heart. "Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled?" Or, can he live in contact with vice without becoming vicious himself? If he should attempt to show any regard for the principles of virtue which may have been instilled into the mind in childhood, this will only expose him to the jest and ridicule of his companions. Therefore, when a youth deliberately chooses his companions among the profligate, he may rest assured that his career will be downward until his character is on a par with theirs; they will give him no peace until they have succeeded in making him just as vile, as reckless, and as abandoned, in every way, as they are.

It is sometimes thought that we slander the devil when we represent him as a malignant spirit, seeking to destroy the souls of men, merely for the gratification of seeing them as miserable as he is. But why should we be incredulous upon this point, when we find men, or rather devils incarnate, who are actively engaged in this unholy work, and who are continually leading the artless and inexperienced into the snares of vice, that they may enjoy a hellish triumph in their ruin? This is a dark feature of human nature, but it is nevertheless true. And when a parent discovers that his child is forming such associations, he may rest assured that if he does not interpose his authority to dissolve the charm, the ruin of his child is inevitable. Perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of the conversion of youth, the thing that stands before them most prominently and palpably, is the fear of ridicule from ungodly companions. Often does the word and the spirit of God arrest them in the midst of their career of



folly, and the mind is disposed seriously to meditate upon death and eternity; but the fear of man has a more powerful influence over their hearts than the fear of God.

I have now followed the course of this young man, so far as to see him fairly embarked upon his career. I have noticed the reasons and motives which probably determined his actions, and here I shall leave him, for the present, with the great world of pleasure before him, and innocence, virtue and happiness behind. Though the course of my remarks may have appeared somewhat digressive, yet they have been made with strict reference to the condition of those who, like him, are entering upon that period of life when they must act for themselves, and where a false movement or a mistaken view of things may entail lasting sorrow. I have not charged waywardness upon the young as something which is indicative of an extraordinary degree of depravity; but as something which naturally grows out of their circumstances. They cannot know the world as those who have had years of experience, and it is natural for them to look upon the best side of human nature; for ingenuousness is a characteristic of youth. Nor is it uncommon for parents to give their children advantages of education which they have not enjoyed themselves; so that, intellectually, the child may be superior to the parent. But parents always possess one kind of knowledge which the child cannot attain, except by equal age and experience. This is a knowledge of men and the world; therefore, when they counsel the young in relation to the dangers and temptations which they will encounter, it becomes them to heed their admonition; for, however the external face of society may change, human nature never changes. It is the same now as it was when our fathers were young.

Why not then be admonished by those who have tried the world, and found it, as the pen of the wise man has written, "Vanity and vexation of spirit," and seek that which brings present peace to the soul, and secures its happiness when the world, with all its attractions, shall have passed away forever? You may imagine that you can possess both the world and

heaven; and that when you have indulged in pleasure and in sin until the disabilities of age are creeping upon you, then you will turn your thoughts toward heaven. But you cannot deceive or trifle with God. He may cut you down in the midst of your career, or he may leave you to mourn over a life wasted, with all the infirmities of age oppressing the body, the grave yawning before you, and a heart as callous and unimpressible as the granite rock.

## II. DANCING.

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AND NOT MANY DAYS AFTER, THE YOUNGER SON GATHERED ALL TOGETHER, AND TOOK HIS JOURNEY INTO A FAR COUNTRY, AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 13.*

IN a former lecture upon this part of the parable, we left the subject of it where he had just entered upon his career of pleasure. It was stated that the unhappy consequences which followed, and which we are yet to consider, were but the inevitable result of the associations that he had formed. Although the narrative is too concise to specify all the particulars of his guilty career, yet there are many things, which are necessarily embraced in the term employed, as descriptive of his manner of life. When we are told that he “wasted his substance with riotous living,” we are at no loss to conjecture who his associates were; or what were some of the specific acts of folly of which he was guilty. Besides, the elder son, in his remonstrance with his father, says, that he had “devoured his living with harlots!” This, then, is enough to assure us that he was guilty of all those evil practices which are naturally associated together, and which are generally included in a life of dissipation. It will be doing no violence to my subject, therefore, if, when considering what belongs to riotous living, we notice those specific acts of folly and sin which are so often the cause of ruin to the young.

All animated nature proclaims that youth is the season of mirth and enjoyment. The young of every grade and class delight the eye, by their gambols; nor is man with his superiority of intellect exempt from those laws which are common to all forms of organized life. This is a period when care has not wrinkled the brow; nor disappointment cankered the heart;

envy and jealousy have not soured the temper, nor infirmity enervated the body; but with the flush of health suffusing the cheek, and joy overflowing the heart, it is but natural for this excess of animal spirits to seek some vent. Nor is it always safe to suppress, by too great austerity, these feelings of our nature, or to confine them, by mere arbitrary restriction, lest they engender in the heart a precocious development of deep and malignant passions. Care sits as unseemly on the youthful brow, as does the artificial flush of youth upon the wrinkled cheek of age. It has been remarked of some men that they never were children; or that they never possessed any of the simplicity and ingenuousness of childhood, nor any taste for its innocent amusements. And their history has proved them deep, designing and cruel.

The pen of inspiration writes, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." The fact then, that youth is a season of peculiar enjoyment, will not justify all those excesses which are committed under the guidance, and by the promptings of a depraved nature; but on the contrary, these will form a part of that terrible reckoning which we must meet at the day of judgment. Therefore, it is of first importance for us to discriminate between those pleasures which are innocent in themselves, and which leave no sting in the conscience; and those that will be a subject of regret, and a ground of condemnation at the tribunal of Heaven. Perhaps there is no amusement peculiar to youth upon which there exists a greater diversity of opinion than upon dancing. For this reason I shall endeavor to discuss the subject thoroughly; and, divested of all prejudice, to set forth its true character and tendency.

The opinions of the great mass of society appear to be formed more from education or prejudice, than from a clear perception of the ground upon which an opinion should be based. With some, it is enough to know that it is an amusement in which they were not permitted to indulge while they were young;



moreover it may be forbidden, by the discipline of the church in which they were reared, therefore it must be sinful.

While others, who esteem the opinion of their parents equally sacred, were not only permitted, but required, to make it a part of their education. The dancing-school ranked with the day-school, and claimed its share of their time; and if not directly sanctioned by the church, it was at least permitted; and, naturally enough, they consider their church as good authority as any other.

We perceive, then, that this is a subject upon which there is a diversity of opinion even among evangelical churches; some condemning it under all circumstances, and inflicting discipline for every infraction; while others leave it for every one to settle with his own conscience. It can hardly be expected, therefore, that we should be able to reconcile all the differences of opinion, that exist among virtuous and even Christian people. All that can be done, and all that I shall attempt is, to give my own opinions and the reasons upon which they are based.

To arrive at any satisfactory result, there is one distinction which must be clearly understood, and kept before the mind, else I shall be entirely misapprehended. It is a distinction between things that are sinful in themselves and things which are made sinful by their attending circumstances and consequences. A thing that is sinful in itself, such as profanity, stealing, theft, murder or any act expressly forbidden by God, is sinful under all circumstances and in all places. It can never be practised without incurring guilt. A thing that is made sinful by its attending circumstances or consequences, may not be sinful when divorced from them, for they are what determine its character. For example, if I discharge a pistol at some inanimate object, as a tree or a board, the act is not sinful, because there are no evil consequences; but if I discharge that pistol into the breast of a man, or into a crowd of human beings, I am at heart and by law a murderer; because there are fatal consequences resulting from the act. Now the act in both cases is the same, but its nature widely different. So of the subject before us. Dancing, certainly, is nowhere forbid-

den in the Word of God, as a specific act; therefore, when sinful, it is made so by attending circumstances, by excesses, by its connections and association, and by its influence upon the mind and heart.

When I have conceded this point, that the Bible nowhere expressly forbids the practice, I have conceded all that can be claimed by its advocates; while I hold, on the other hand, that the whole tenor of inspired teaching is against it, in the manner in which it is generally practised. But as great stress is sometimes laid upon the fact that, while dancing is often referred to in the Scriptures, it is nowhere condemned, it is necessary that I should consider the Bible argument, and show what it does say upon the subject.

Dancing is of very early origin. It is often mentioned, both in sacred and secular history, as a mode of expressing joy. The original Hebrew word which we translate to dance, simply means leap for joy. If we were to substitute this translation in all those places where it occurs in Hebrew writing, it would simplify the argument amazingly; for I imagine that it would be extremely difficult to make such an interpretation comprehend a cotillion or a polka. Besides, both among the Jews and the idolatrous nations where it was practised, it was strictly a religious rite, and practised in connection with other religious ceremonies. If the Bible refers to or countenances dancing at all, of course it is such dancing as was then practised; therefore, any argument, based upon these Scripture expressions, must be fallacious. If we take the Bible for authority, we must dance as the Bible prescribes. In after years, and probably when this parable was written, dancing had become secularized, and constituted, as it now does, a popular amusement; therefore, we find very little reference to it in the New Testament; certainly it is nowhere commended, nor are any cases mentioned where it was practised by those whose characters are worthy of our imitation. There are but two instances given in the whole of the New Testament, and the characters of those who practised it I shall briefly notice.



One occurs in the parable which we are considering, where it is said that the elder son, when he came from the field, as he drew nigh to the house, heard music and dancing. Now all that we can say in relation to this is, that the whole scene is a fiction, and this incident is introduced merely for the sake of illustrating the joy which was felt by the entire household upon the occasion; and gives no more sanction to the practice than it does to the conduct of the elder brother, who is represented as being angry and refusing to go in. This incident, if it proves anything, only shows that dancing was a mode of celebrating a joyful event. But are we to argue that because it was a popular amusement in Scripture times, and is referred to as such, therefore it has the authority of Scripture? This kind of reasoning would sanction polygamy, and many other practices that would not be tolerated for a moment. Another case where dancing is mentioned, is where the daughter of Herodias appeared before Herod, and by her graceful and lascivious movements, so captivated the drunken, silly monarch, that he promised her anything that she should ask, even to the half of his kingdom. The vain and heartless lady, instigated by her mother, demanded nothing less than the bloody head of one of God's saints. And here you have the character of the only real dancer mentioned in the New Testament. We should judge from this incident, that religion and dancing were not quite so harmonious as many would have us believe. All that we derive from the Scriptures is, that dancing was practised among the Jews as a religious ceremony; that at a later period it was sometimes practised in families, to celebrate a joyful event; and finally, that it was also an accomplishment by which vile courtesans pandered to the base passions of wicked rulers. Now if any one can frame an argument from this, to justify all the excesses which characterize modern dancing, they must possess a degree of ingenuity totally beyond my comprehension. As well might we argue, that, because Paul recommended to Timothy, for the benefit of a weak stomach, a little of the pure wine then in use, therefore, a man is justified in destroying himself by pouring into his system that vile decoction which passes

under the name of wine at the present day. If the drunkard were to offer such an argument, as a justification for his course, there would be no difficulty in perceiving its fallacy. If we drink wine merely to show our veneration for the Scriptures, we must use that kind, and under those circumstances which the Scriptures prescribe. So if we dance, from our respect to Scripture examples, we must dance as they did, and with all those restrictions respecting excesses which the Bible gives.

The truth of the matter is, that the moment you place the amusement under proper restraint, it loses most of its attractions. The fascination of dancing depends, not so much upon its graceful movements, as the dissipation which generally accompanies it. If it be a necessary accomplishment to give exercise to the body and grace to the manners, why not practice it by day rather than by night, and under the eye of the parent, in the same manner that other accomplishments are attained? This, while it would secure all the advantages claimed for it as a part of education, would remove all the objections as a means of dissipation. But, as I have already hinted, it is the excitement of midnight revelry, and the abandonment of the whole soul to excess of pleasure, that constitutes its charm, as well as its danger. For this reason, in the discussion of a subject like the present, we cannot confine ourselves to the mere abstract question, but it must be considered in connection with its concomitants, and in view of its practical tendencies.

#### I. One of the most important of these is ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE HEALTH.

Balls and cotillion parties are amusements peculiar to the winter months. The dresses prescribed for such occasions are of the thinnest texture, such as are never worn out of the ball room except in the heat of summer. To compensate for this, the rooms are generally heated to a temperature above that of an ordinary room, such as the system is accustomed to, at that season of the year. The exercise is often of a violent character, continued under the excitement of music, until the

lungs are panting, the heart fluttering, and the perspiration reeking from every pore of the skin. Many young ladies, of delicate constitution, have been carried fainting from exhaustion, to the open air, where the thermometer was at zero. And many others have rushed out thoughtlessly, to refresh themselves with a few breaths in an uncontaminated atmosphere; and this process of heating and cooling suddenly, so as to be ready for the next figure, is alternated, from early evening, through the hours of midnight, until day.

Add to this an unseasonable supper; in many cases with the adjuvant of a little wine, or cordial, to sustain the flagging spirits, and thus the excitement continues until, from very exhaustion, it loses its charm. The eyelids begin to droop, and jaded nature asserts her prerogatives in no questionable tokens.

I appeal to those who are familiar with these scenes, to know if I have misstated or over-colored the case. We have all been young once, and there are few who have not seen the inside of a ball room; both when the brilliant light of the chandeliers added new lustre to beauty, and when the pale rays of morning revealed the haggard countenance, and the rich curls, drawn out into long, lank tresses, more like the locks of a mermaid than of a belle. And I appeal to your sober judgment to decide, whether such dissipation of body is safe for any; but especially for a fair and fragile form, almost balancing between health and incipient disease, where one imprudent act may turn the scale and seal the fate.

Young ladies generally place a light estimate upon health, and often, if left to themselves, they will barter it for a momentary pleasure. And sometimes mothers are inconsiderate enough to permit them to expose their persons in a way both unbecoming and dangerous. Fashion, and not health, prescribes the rule, and the dictate of fashion must be obeyed, even though life be the forfeit.

Occasionally the mother will venture a feeble remonstrance against the bare neck, bare arms and tissue dress, but the daughter assures her that she is perfectly warm; and the

mother draws her thick woolen shawl around her own shivering form, moves her chair up nearer the fire and appears satisfied. Strange that there should be such a difference between the animal temperature of a mother and her daughter. Thus she sends forth the child of her love to the midnight revel. Perhaps in the course of a few weeks—it may be longer—she notices a slight cough, too trifling to excite particular attention. Some favorite domestic remedy is administered, with the expectation that it will be easily subdued; but months glide by and still the cough remains, and she wonders where her child has taken such an obstinate cold. Soon the deep, round flush shows its well defined lines upon her cheek, pain darts through her side, and the cough deepens until it assumes those hoarse, sepulchral tones which tell of wasted lungs. Now the mother's fears are thoroughly aroused. She takes her daughter to the springs and to the seashore; she gives her the benefit of the clear mountain air and of the fog of the valley. She places her in charge of one who tortures her with blisters and reduces her by bleeding; of another who wraps her debilitated, wasted, bloodless form in cold, wet sheets; as though the object was to extinguish the little spark of life that remained. But all in vain; and at last she turns her face homeward with the sad conviction that she is bringing her child back to die. And now see that mother watching the bed of her suffering daughter. Every cough sends a pang to her heart. Every groan finds a sympathetic response. Long days and anxious nights are hers, and often does she wonder why one so fair and promising should be cut down in the bloom of youth. The ways of God seem a deep mystery to her. Ah! she little thinks that when she was decking her child for the ball room she was putting garlands on the brow of a new victim to be sacrificed at the shrine of fashion. But if the various members of that suffering system could speak for themselves they would tell a tale that would chill her with horror. The lungs, the heart, the brain, the stomach, the skin would combine their testimony that they resisted till they could endure no longer, and then those seeds of disease and death were sown which no human art could eradicate. True, these fatal conse-



quences do not always follow, but if all the facts could be known, and the connection of the one with the other traced, we should learn that many an untimely death has been the result of these practices. What other consequences can be anticipated from such excesses, and what parent can expect prudence and moderation in a child placed amid such temptations? I have spoken at length upon this branch of the subject, because it is one that is often overlooked, or passed with a brief comment. Yet it is an argument that appeals directly to our affections and our duty as parents—a duty much too lightly esteemed, but which is no less imperative.

II. But we must not overlook the fact that it is INTELLECT which elevates man above all the mere animal tribes. It is the soul, created in the image of God, that makes him a being but little lower than the angels, and susceptible of elevation to communion with God and companionship with angelic beings. What then can bear any comparison to the importance of cultivating his superior nature? And how should we estimate these things which directly conflict with this end? I need but refer to it as a well known truth, that the pleasures of the dance and the gay assembly at once dissipate the mind and disqualify it for application or improvement. Books may be laid aside and teachers discharged when the education of the head comes in conflict with that of the heels; for wherever the body may be the young mind is reveling in day-dreams of pleasure. And often does the poor teacher bear the weight of a parent's censure, when the parent himself has taken the surest method of nullifying every effort on his part. And often does he deprecate that folly which will permit the intellect to run to waste, merely for the sake of a few accomplishments that may be attained with equal certainty in another way. What bodily attitudes will supply the defects of education, and what mannerism of the ball room will compare with that grace and intelligence which proceed from the emotions of a good heart and an accomplished mind? Let a child possess these and they will impart a charm to every word and grace to every act.

III. Youth is not only the season for mental cultivation, but for RECEIVING THOSE IMPRESSIONS that will remain stamped indelibly upon the soul. It is then that the sympathies of the heart are easily touched, and the character, in a great degree, determined. Therefore, whatever indisposes the mind for serious contemplation, must prove of lasting injury. It is because of the acknowledged influence of the ball room, that they are an object of such dread to the minister of the Gospel. He knows that the mind, engrossed with these follies, is perfectly insensible to any permanent impressions of truth, and though he may be successful in arousing the mind, so that the individual shall begin to think of God and of eternity, and he may even see the good seed taking root in the heart; yet one night of dissipation will be sure to blast this cherished expectation, and leave the soul as barren as a rock. Often has the work of years of patient watching, with hope, been thus destroyed in a moment. And often does he see those, of whom he had reason to hope better things, allured from the fold of the Shepherd, back into the world where they have ceased to give any evidence of a renewed heart, merely because they had not strength of principle enough to resist the first advance of the tempter.

There are certain things so incompatible with each other, that you will never find them existing in the same breast, and we are to judge of their nature, by the influence which they have upon the heart as well as the life; indeed the life is only the external manifestation of the existing state of the heart. Whether dancing be a safe amusement for Christians, we can easily determine by referring to a few facts, that are too obvious to be disputed.

1. The dancing Christian is not a praying Christian. The ball room and the prayer meeting are never frequented by the same individual. I have known many young converts who have never been seen in the prayer meeting after they had attended a single dance.

2. The dancing Christian is not a working Christian. How can such a person labor in the vineyard of God, warning others of the danger of living only for this world, when, by his con-



duct, he shows the same devotion to its pleasures, as do the mere votaries of pleasure?

3. The dancing Christian has no influence as a Christian. He may profess all the love of a John, and exhibit all the zeal of a Paul; but it will make no impression on others. Whether their course be right or wrong, there is, in the eyes of the world, a glaring inconsistency between their profession and their conduct, which no ingenuity or sophistry can reconcile.

4. The dancing Christian is a positive injury to the Church. The world judges an entire church, and sometimes religion itself, by the character of its members. And when a disciple of Christ brings discredit upon himself, he injures all who are associated with him. One withered, gangrenous limb taints a whole system.

5. The dancing Christian encourages others in sin. Sometimes even the worldly feel that there is something in their course of life which is not right, and are led to doubt the propriety of these excesses. But the presence in the ball room of one of Christ's representatives gives it the sanction of religion, and they naturally think that if it will do for Christians, it will do for them; thus, the voice of an awakened conscience is stifled by one of Christ's professed friends.

If these things are true, if it be a fact that this amusement breaks up the communion of the soul with God, disqualifies a person from laboring for Christ, destroys the influence of Christian character, and not only this, but renders the individual a burden upon the church, palsying its energies and strengthening the hands of the vain and pleasure-loving multitude, can there be a doubt whether it be a proper amusement for a professing Christian, of one whose duty it is to "avoid the very appearance of evil." These facts are assumed because they are too obvious to require proof. If proof were necessary, I might summon the combined testimony of every minister and every church in the land. If this be an amusement proper for one member of a church, it is proper for all, and if it is proper for a whole church, it is proper for its pastor; and if it is proper for

him, it is proper for a Synod, or a Conference, or a General Assembly.

Let me suppose, for a moment, that your pastor were to join you, pleasure-loving professor, and were to lead in the dance, and preside at the supper, participating in all the wild enthusiasm of the occasion; would you respect him longer as a religious teacher? Would you not, in his case, perceive that there was a strange inconsistency between his conduct and his profession; and if you really loved him, would you not seek to lead him aside, and beg of him not to destroy himself by such an act of folly? Why should he not then be equally candid with you? What is he more than a Christian professor; and what are you, less? The difference between him and you is one of position, and not of obligation. I have taken no vows upon me, respecting my private character and deportment, save those which I assumed when I entered the Church of Christ, and which rest with equal obligation upon every professing Christian. And I have yet to learn that the individual who received the one talent was not just as responsible for the use of that, as he who received five. If, therefore, you would condemn such a course in me, as inconsistent with my profession, you write "Mene Tekel" over against yourself. This, I am aware, is bringing the argument nearer home than is perhaps agreeable. We are more fond of holding such subjects at a distance, and viewing them abstractly, than as matters of practical importance; but it is sometimes necessary to extend an argument to that point, where its conclusions are so absurd as to admit of but one opinion. And here is a point upon the subject before us, where, I imagine, our views will all harmonize. But if the deductions are legitimately drawn, the conclusion is inevitable. A Synodical Ball, where Doctors of Divinity were the managers, and where the choir furnished the music, might create something of a sensation in the church and in the world; but if it is a thing consistent with a Christian profession, one that the ministers of Christ may sanction in the churches, why should they not set the example themselves? For it is a part of their duty to be "ensamples unto the flock." Let me

then, in concluding this subject, appeal to your candid judgment, and inquire if you can show one valuable purpose which these vain amusements serve? Do they elevate the mind, or improve the heart? Do they fortify the soul against those trials and afflictions which may befall us in life; so that it can sustain with patient resignation the multiplied evils which checker over our path? Do they qualify us for those noble pursuits which are the object of our creation? Finally, do they produce that happiness which they promise; or, on the other hand, only cheat, and beguile, and delude for a season, and end in bitter disappointment?

Go ask that young lady, whose eyes sparkled with delight as you saw her moving in the giddy throng, why she is so sad and dispirited, when only last night she appeared the gayest of the gay? And if she is candid, she may tell you that she had been anticipating that joyous occasion for weeks. It had occupied her thoughts by day, and her dreams by night. And now all had passed away like a rainbow upon a dark cloud, leaving nothing but the cloud behind. Perhaps if you could look deeper into her heart, you would discover some corroding passion, such as envy or jealousy, distilling its poison into her soul. Her expected triumph had turned into a defeat. The rose had fallen off, and the thorn only is left. The truth is, that when we regard the world as one great theatre of pleasure, we sadly mistake its true character. From the cradle to the grave, life is filled with stern realities; and if we do not prepare ourselves to meet them, they will meet us, and become the more overpowering, because they take us by surprise.

Do not, then, like the infatuated prodigal, who only stands as the representative of a large class in society, waste everything, and destroy yourself for a few days of pleasure. But fix definitely in your own minds what is right and what is wrong; and then form the inflexible resolution, to be guided by those great principles. Let no persuasion of others, no fear of ridicule, no false notions of honor, cause you to swerve from that purpose; and this will prove an anchor to the soul, when otherwise your course might be like that of a ship

driven by the winds, and carried away by counter currents, without anchor to hold, or helm to guide. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. He shall be like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither. And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."



### III. THE THEATRE AND THE STRANGE WOMAN.

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AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 13.*

WE come, now, to a part of the career of the prodigal over which I would fain draw the veil, and leave it for the imagination to picture rather than attempt to describe the scenes behind the curtain. It is extremely difficult to deal with such a subject as the one we are to consider, with sufficient definiteness to produce the desired effect, and at the same time with that delicacy which it demands. If, in the judgment of any, I should err, it will not be from a design to outrage the feelings even of the most fastidious, but from a sincere desire to present the subject in its true colors, that by being forewarned you may be forearmed.

“Riotous living” is a comprehensive phrase. And had we no other information respecting the habits of this young man, we should naturally include the Theatre and the house of the Strange Woman, in the places that he frequented. But the parable goes further than merely to hint at his course of life in this general way; and in another verse tells us what he was about in that far country where he went; and how he came to be reduced to such extremity as to be willing to descend to the menial occupation of a swineherd. Some may imagine that I am putting a forced construction on the parable, when I introduce him into all those scenes of amusement and dissipation, which are the cause of ruin to thousands at the present day; but let us, in imagination, go back and view the circumstances of the case as they appear. Here was a young man of ardent imagination, the son of a wealthy proprietor, living remote from those temptations which have such a powerful attraction to some minds. This appears from the circumstance,



that the elder brother was laboring in the field, from the fatted calf, and many other little things which show that he was reared amid rural scenes; and that what he so ardently desired was the excitement and dissipation of city life; therefore when he left his father's roof, his steps were doubtless directed to some one of those great cities renowned to the present day for their splendor and their profligacy. Places where the dance, the theatre, the wine cup and the siren, all combined quickly to effect his ruin. What young man in ancient or modern times, was ever reduced to such a state of wretchedness as his, except by the combined influence of all this machinery of Satan? No one of these alone is powerful enough to debase the soul, and exterminate every virtuous principle from the heart, for while they only operate upon one sense, or upon a single passion at a time, there are counter-acting agencies at work, and there is enough of the man left to exhibit some of the qualities of manhood. But when this awful array of infernal agencies make their combined attack, inflaming every passion and paralyzing every virtuous feeling, what being possessed of the propensities and infirmities of our nature can withstand?

Theatres are not an institution of modern invention, but they existed long before this parable was written. They were the subject of legislation and legal restriction, and sometimes of legal prohibition, as far back as the days of Aristotle. Undoubtedly this young man, when he arrived at the place of his destination, it might have been Athens, or Corinth, with his fortune at his own disposal, signalized his advent, as many do, at the present day, who visit the great metropolis of our land, by attending the theatre.

But it is not of the theatre as it existed in the days of Euripides, of which I wish to speak; though even then it was condemned and shunned by the virtuous Socrates. It is the theatre as it exists at the present time, with all its vulgarity, its indecency, its drunkenness and licentiousness, of which I wish to warn you. The modern theatre does not hold the same relative position in society, that it did in the

days of Shakspeare, when first it became a place of popular amusement to those speaking the Anglo-Saxon language. Then the art of printing was in its infancy; books were found only in the libraries of colleges, or in the possession of the learned. Many a bold knight, whose valorous deeds are the record of history, could no more read a sentence of English than he could decipher an Egyptian hieroglyphic. The great mass of the people had no taste for amusements more intellectual and refined than the bloody tournament, and pastimes equally sanguinary, and even more debasing. Boxing, wrestling, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and similar cruel exhibitions were those which delighted the multitude, while the tilting match, the race course and the stag hunt were the sports of the rich and noble. The drama was then far above the popular taste; more refined and chaste in its exhibitions than the tastes of the audience, therefore, its tendency was to elevate rather than debase. But at the present time, while the public mind and taste have been refined to a high degree, by means of universal education, the drama itself has sunk far below what it was in those days of comparative barbarism; and there have been added to it many things with which it has no natural affinity, but which have been devised for the sole purpose of enticing the young. Therefore, its tendency is exactly the opposite of what it was in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Even the plays of Shakspeare, far as they fall below the present standard of purity, in many respects, are still too refined and moral for the modern stage. Of course the private character of the actors corresponds to that of those whom they personify.

If information is needed upon this point, it can be obtained in the records of criminal courts; where the names and infamous deeds of some who are flattered and caressed, and upon whom the pleasure-loving public have lavished fortunes, stand forth with unenviable prominence. There are some, doubtless, so little informed upon this subject as to imagine that the performance upon the stage is what we refer to, when we speak of the demoralizing influence of the theatre. Bad as it is, would to God that we had nothing worse to reveal; and that society

had no more powerful agent of mischief with which to contend. And it may be, that some who have even visited its dress circles, and witnessed the acting and dancing, with no other bad effect than an occasional application of the handkerchief to the face, to hide a mantling blush, think that they have visited the theatre and understand its real character and tendency; whereas they have no idea of *the scenes that were transpiring* within its polluted walls, while they were engrossed with the performance on the stage.

There is many a marble temple, chaste and imposing without, while within are gloomy cells, and from its deep, damp vaults goes up continually the sigh of the prisoner; many a whitened sepulchre, beautiful without, that is filled with dead men's bones. If you would know what the building is, you must not form your opinion from that which is fitted up expressly to please the eye; but you must go down into its dungeons and sepulchres, and see what they contain. So if you would know what a theatre is, you must leave your self-respect and your reputation at the door, and go up into those dens of Satan, where they keep that which will dethrone a man's reason, and make him a fit dupe for those harpies who are always hovering near, ready to seize their victim when prepared. You must mingle with the abandoned creatures who occupy the adjoining tier, and hear such impurity of language, such obscenity and blasphemy, as you will hear nowhere else this side of hell. You must see the artless victim, who, perhaps, for the first time, has put himself in the power of the tempter, first inflamed with wine, and then led off to the home of her whose "house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." True, you never beheld these scenes, for you probably went to gratify an idle curiosity, and to see only that which it was designed that you should witness. Beside, they are all carefully concealed from the scrutiny of the female eye; for custom assigns her a place which propriety demands that she should keep; but with the other sex the case is different. The door is open to all who wish to enter; and the grey-headed old sinner, who has left his wife and children, and character, in his western home; and the

city debauchee, who never had either (especially the latter); and the country youth, with the down of sixteen on his upper lip, all walk up the same broad staircase together, and find a hearty welcome. It is not the influence of the stage alone that renders the theatre so obnoxious to the virtuous and religious portion of society; but it is the combined machinery of the play-house, the ball-room, the grog-shop and the brothel, and its superiority to them all, as an engine of Satan for mischief, that excites their abhorrence. Here every sense is sated, and every passion is inflamed by one overpowering array of appliances. The eye is dazzled with tinsel splendor; the ear is charmed by every instrument of music in the hands of skillful artists. Here stands the tempter and proffers the cup of enchantment, and there the siren, to bear off her dazzled and giddy victim, to her house of infamy and ruin. What inexperienced youth can withstand such an array of temptation as this?

But, perhaps, an apologist will say that the profligate will find the means of dissipation. If they are not obtained here, they will seek them elsewhere. Virtuous people can attend the theatre without being annoyed by any of these disgusting exhibitions of depravity. It is only those who are viciously inclined that are participators in these scenes of wickedness. And why shall the virtuous portion of society be excluded from an innocent amusement, because some will make it an occasion of vicious indulgence.

The reason is very plain. It is simply because these things are so interwoven and blended together, that you cannot separate one from the other; and when you sustain it by your countenance and money, you help to support not merely the stage, but all that is connected with it. Every parent who goes to the theatre declares by this act that he is willing to sustain an institution which Satan has devised expressly to ruin his children. Every young man who attends the theatre says that he is willing to help him to dig the grave of all virtuous principles, and finally to publish his disgrace and ruin to the world. And every young lady by this declares that she is willing to assist wicked men and abandoned women to ruin her brother, or



perhaps one dearer, and to see her own sex degraded below the inmates of a Turkish harem. Such is the theatre!! with all its attractions and all its facilities for destroying the souls and bodies of men. An institution which is, and from its enormous expense must ever remain, a curse peculiar to populous towns. We, as a community, are not liable to its temptations, nor are our children nightly in danger of being allured within its precincts. But at the same time it is probable that many of the youth whom I address may see the day when they will need all the fortitude and principle they possess to escape its snares. For, let a young man imbibe a relish for its demoralizing exhibitions, and his moral sense is soon blunted, and ere long he will find his money, his character and his occupation gone. Sagacious business men will not keep one in their employment who frequent these haunts of vice; because they know that such a life cannot be sustained by money honestly earned. Often do we read in the newspapers such announcements as this: "Large embezzlement of silk goods. Mr. S., a clerk in the importing house of A. B. & C. D., was this morning arrested," &c., and we pass by the paragraph as of too common occurrence to excite particular notice. But every case of this kind has a history; and if we could trace out one of these, we should perhaps find that the unhappy, and now criminal, young man left his home in the country with a father's blessing and a mother's tears. The hearts of the household had been gladdened, by hearing that he had obtained a situation, where, with application and perseverance, he might hope eventually to rise from a clerk to a proprietor. Fond sisters, too, had built their castles in the air; and visions of a splendid mansion, carriages and liveried footmen, already occupied their thoughts; the day dream of an ardent imagination. Here, then, are concentrated the hopes of a whole family; but alas, cruelly blasted, hopes, hearts and all, crushed forever by the withering blow.

Let us now go into the prison-house, and ask the poor criminal how he came to commit so base a deed, and he may tell you that his first, fatal step was that which placed him within the doors of the theatre. When the business of the day



was over, his little room, six stories high, heated by the burning sun in midsummer, or its cold, empty grate in winter, was so cheerless, that he could not stay there. Where should he go? In all that great city, with its thousands of pleasant family circles, there was not one that would bid him welcome. If he were to venture to call at the house of his employer, he might look coldly upon him, and inquire if he had any business with him; and his daughters would toss their heads and wonder at his impertinence. There seemed to be but one resort, the doors of the theatre were always open, there he could find amusement and associates. Soon he found his scanty salary insufficient to sustain these extravagant habits; but how could he change his course? His little room looked more dreary and desolate than ever. He could not abide sitting there alone, without a friend or amusement of any kind! The result is what you see. Hundreds of young men of promise have thus gone down to ruin.

But there is another view of this subject, which needs a word of comment. How are these establishments, demanding such an enormous outlay of money, sustained? If the immense sums which are annually expended in the city of New York alone, to support its theatres and opera houses, could be spread before the public, it would astonish even the most credulous. Upon this subject, I know of no statistics, or any data, upon which an estimate may be based. I can only give a single item, and leave you to form your own opinions. In a recent newspaper controversy, between the manager of the Italian Opera and his principal tenor singer, it appears that the manager had paid him between thirty and forty thousand dollars for his services during twenty months. That is, the public in one city have paid one man a higher salary for singing, than too, in a language which few of them understand, than this great nation, with its overflowing coffers and immense revenue, pays its president. A fit commentary on our national character; mean, where we should be generous, and lavish to profusion where we should be close. If one man receives such a compensation, what must be the cost of sustaining a single establishment

of this kind ; singers, dancers, actors, musicians and all ? And we may well inquire who it is that pays these enormous sums. I answer : First. An ephemeral aristocracy, composed of men who once had hard hands and kind hearts, who began life with a stock in trade that they could easily transport on a wheelbarrow, but who now ride in their carriages, and consider it necessary to their newly acquired gentility to own a box in a fashionable theatre or opera house.

Second. There are thousands from the east, west, north and south, continually flocking to the city, upon business or pleasure, or both, and who give their dollar nightly at the door of the theatre. Many of them are persons of character and standing in society, and even in the church, who pay their dollar tribute at the contribution box of Satan, for he always stands out for the dollar without flinching ; but who will almost leave the print of their fingers on the quarter they drop into the Lord's treasury.

Third. The class to which the young man referred to belongs, those who are on their way to ruin, and had already commenced their dishonest and shameful career by plundering their employers.

Fourth. Graceless young profligates, who will spend in a few years what it took their fathers a lifetime of unremitting exertion and toil to accumulate.

Fifth. Gamblers, thieves, pickpockets, pimps to brothels, all seeking their victims among the rich dupes from the "rural districts," who go there with great fat-looking pocket-books, and come away without them ; and who often, when the loss is not too heavy, will let them go rather than tell how they lost them. Many a man would rather abide the loss of a few hundred dollars, than to have his name go back to his family in the newspaper, coupled with the place and the company in which he was robbed. There is many a pocket-book lost that is never reported at the police office, nor advertised in the newspapers.

This is the way that this mighty monster, who sucks the very blood of society, is fed and fattened. He swallows up,

in his capacious maw, the overflowing wealth of the millionaire, and the ill-gotten gains of the robber and gambler. The high and the low, the respectable and the most degraded outcast, all pay their tribute to his support. He is sustained by those who should be the first to enter upon a war of extermination against him; those whom he robs of children, brothers, lovers and husbands.

Many have never viewed this subject in its true aspect, because they are too far removed from its influence to see the extent of the mischief. But it is well to have our opinions fixed upon a subject so prolific of crime and misery that we may be prepared to resist temptation when it comes.

Perhaps some of you may ere long be placed within the sphere of its influence, where you will be assailed, not only by this, but by a temptation of a more dangerous character, for the play-house and the house of the strange woman, as Solomon calls her, are side by side; and the facilities for entering one from the other, as I have already shown, are abundant. The young man who comes under this kind of influence, where his mind is filled with licentious thoughts, his heart corrupted by base passions, and whose associates are profligate men and abandoned women, is ruined to a certainty. Nothing but Almighty grace can save him; and there is little hope of his seeking that. It is what made such an utter wreck of the young prodigal; and has made a wreck of the souls and bodies of many stronger men than he. How then shall the young fortify their hearts so as to secure themselves against such influences.

Aside from good principles, deeply planted in the soul, I know of no means so effective as the society of virtuous and intelligent females. This exerts a most happy influence upon the character of those whom nature has made of a sterner mould. It refines the feelings, polishes the manners, and instills chaste and pure sentiments in the heart. The young man who associates in this kind of society, feels that he has a character to maintain, and with it he possesses a degree of self-respect, and respect for others, that operates continually upon

his mind, as a counteracting agent. It may be, and often is, difficult, as I have already remarked on another occasion, for a young man without money, or friends, in a strange city, to gain access to the kind of society that he would choose; but let him keep clear of evil company, and if he cannot have good society, bear with the hardships of solitude for a while. Let him make his little room look as inviting as possible; let him get books and music, buy himself a fiddle, or a flute, or a guitar, or some instrument, to while away the hours of solitude. They will cost less than a few nights of dissipation. Let him spend his leisure hours in improving his mind, and cultivating his taste, and rely upon it they will soon become anything but tedious. His employer, too, will note the difference between his appearance after a good night's rest, with an easy conscience, and that of one who has spent his night in debauchery, and who comes to his business with inflamed eyes and languid step; and he will make that discrimination in his future plans. Sooner or later the bars will come down, and he will reap the benefit of his virtuous life. These are the young men who are selected for junior partners, and who are introduced into the domestic circle, as safe companions for daughters, and who sometimes form a partnership of another kind without going out of the firm.

While, it is true, that nothing exerts a better influence upon the heart of man than the society of virtuous and intelligent females; so, on the other hand, it is equally true, that there is nothing so utterly damning to a man's principles, and character, and prospects, as the influence of a vicious and profligate woman. She exerts a more blighting influence for evil, than the other does for good; because it is in accordance with a depraved appetite. An abandoned woman is the most powerful and intensely wicked creature out of hell; far worse in her character and influence than a profligate man. It may be that she only appears so to us, because here is where we are accustomed, from infancy, to look for refinement and virtue, for the same reason that an unsightly daub looks blacker upon a polished marble surface.



But there is, I imagine, another reason which has an influence in sinking her to lower depths of infamy than is ordinarily attained by the other sex. When a woman has lost her virtue, she has lost every thing dear to her heart. She has thrown herself out of society, and obtained a name of infamy that nothing can blacken. Profanity, drunkenness, and all the catalogue of crimes, do not essentially effect her character, because the stains of this vice are so black that no other vices can deepen them. Her whole life is devoted to dissipation; there is nothing else she can do. But with the other sex the case is different. A man has other occupations and pursuits; and, strange to tell, a character left. This is the reason why the society of a strange woman should be shunned like a contagion; for there is no contagious disease so quickly communicated to the body, nor so deadly in its influence, as the contaminating influence of this vice upon the heart. That these things are so, is owing to a wrong state of public sentiment. The woman who has lost her good name is made to feel that this is an error which no penitence can retrieve; a stain that no tears can wash away! But the man who has committed a crime, but one degree removed from murder; that has ruined an innocent and confiding creature, who yielded him her affection, and then her honor, and filled a house with mourning, is still admitted into good society, and flattered and caressed by those who should treat him with scorn and contempt.

The Word of God, from which our sentiments should be derived, makes no such distinction between the two sexes. And why should not a licentious man be excluded from the society of the virtuous, as well as a fallen woman? This is a branch of the subject which addresses itself to the female part of the community. So long as a reputation, blackened by this vice, presents no insurmountable obstacle to the best circles, and to the most eligible matrimonial connections, young men will not regard it as a great crime against society? And when I hear a young lady express the greatest contempt for one of her own sex, who perhaps has yielded to arts more complicated and wicked than those by which Satan deceived our common



mother; and see her receive with smiles and flattery the author of this shame, or one of like stamp, I am led to the irresistible conclusion, that this is an affectation of virtue that she does not possess in her heart. Rely upon it, that there is an evil here that needs correction, and it is for the female part of society to apply the remedy, and make the seducer and the profligate of the other sex feel that this is a sin against God and society, that cannot be overlooked.

In tracing the history of the prodigal step by step, I have been of necessity compelled to follow him into some scenes upon which I would have gladly dropped the curtain; but if they are the fruitful cause of ruin to multitudes of young men, how can I pass them by? And how can I administer a sufficient caution without showing the nature of the temptation? An evil must be exposed before we can know how to apply the remedy. In what I have said upon this subject, I have been guided only by a sincere desire to warn the young against the array of evil influences which will assail them when they go forth into the world, with no other guide than their own inexperience, and with no stronger fortification than principles which may be as yet but partially formed. And I remark, finally, that whatever other means may be adopted, as auxiliaries, there is but one course that will prove an effective safeguard, and that is to form those principles and adopt those resolutions which are commended to you in the Word of God; and then seek for His sustaining grace in enabling you to carry them out.

Every young man, upon entering life, should adopt a resolution upon certain points involving health and character; that he should determine to die rather than yield. And no temptation to which he will be exposed demands a more determined resolution than this. Satan knew that all his arts and stratagems would have no influence with father Adam if he appeared in his own proper person. So he enlisted woman's influence in the work, and it was this powerful agency, exerted for evil, that caused him to fall. Solomon, too, the wisest and greatest of men, was led astray and ruined by the seductions of wicked women. And after a somewhat extensive and bitter experience,

hear his warning voice: "The lips of a strange woman drop as a honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Remove thy feet far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house, lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel; lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors be in the house of a stranger, and thou mourn at the last when thy flesh and thy body are consumed." He adds: "For at the window of my house I looked through the casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man, void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner. And he went the way of her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And behold there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtle of heart." "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to a snare and knoweth not that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death!"

## IV. PROFANE SWEARING.

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AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 13.*

PROFANE swearing is not a sin peculiar to any age or country. Every Christian nation has its vocabulary of oaths, by which they insult the majesty of Heaven, and manifest the universal depravity of our race. It is probable, that had it not been so distinctly and emphatically prohibited by God himself, as a sin against his Divine majesty, other forms of expression might have served, as the language of passion, or as expletives; but because it is a thing forbidden and declared to be peculiarly obnoxious to God, therefore these are the very terms that the depraved mind seizes with the greatest avidity. Why is this so, unless it be that the human heart delights in showing its hatred to its Maker, and its readiness to insult the Being who, of all others, it is most bound to reverence?

It is unnecessary for me to attempt anything like an argument upon this subject, for it is one that admits of no argument. There stands the statute, engraven in the court of Heaven, on tables of stone, and given to Moses under the most sublime display of Divine glory. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain!" We can see what importance God attaches to it, from the fact, that when he has given us but ten commandments to regulate our intercourse with him, and with each other, he has placed this among the first. The Saviour, the object of whose mission was to magnify the law and make it honorable, has left us his commentary upon the subject. "Swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jeru-

saalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black." This passage is doubtless directed against those evasions which have always been practised, where the spirit and the intent are the same, but where the works or attributes of God are substituted for the name. The Jews had such reverence for the name of Jehovah that they never introduced it in conversation without some accompanying mark of veneration. Therefore they were in the habit of swearing by heaven, or by their own head, or by the sacred city; all of which was an evasion of the express letter of the law, and a breach of its spirit, consequently sinful in the estimation of God.

Other sins of which men are guilty gratify some strong passion or propensity of the human heart, or procure some momentary gratification of the animal appetite. Theft, lying, stealing, indeed the whole catalogue of crimes, is such as are committed under the influence of some powerful motive. But this seems to be a sin of mere wantonness, of foolish temerity, of heaven-daring impiety, without a motive; therefore, from its very nature, must be one that God regards with peculiar abhorrence. This is a fact which I wish to impress upon the mind, as a starting-point; because most of what I have to say upon this subject relates to its influence upon your personal character and prospects. As a sin against God, what more is necessary to be said? It is one that no person ever attempted to justify; not even the profane swearer himself. His excuse, if he offers any at all, is, that it has become a habit, so that he uses profane language involuntarily and often unconsciously to himself; therefore all that it is necessary for me to attempt is to portray, as clearly as I am able, the evil influence of this sin upon the individual and upon society.

I would not willingly impute crime to any innocent being, much less would I seek to blacken the character of one who has already sins enough for which to answer. When, therefore, I come before you, and boldly charge this young prodigal, with whose history and character you have become somewhat familiar, with using profane language, I feel bound to give a good



and substantial reason for what I say ; or I may place myself in the unenviable position of a slanderer ; a slanderer, too, of the worst kind, charging sins upon one who, from the peculiar circumstances of the case, cannot come up here and defend himself. Were it necessary, I could give several reasons. One is, that he evidently was not a young man of much strength of character or intellect, as his history shows, and this is the class who generally think profane language an embellishment to conversation. But the principal ground for my opinion is the character of the associates which he formed, and the scenes in which he participated, and to which his wealth gave him ready access.

I am not prepared to assert that every young man who swears is guilty of other crimes, but I am willing to stake my reputation for sagacity upon the truth, that no young man commits all those sins against God and society, of which he was guilty, without adding to their catalogue the sin of profanity ; for it is the language of crime and wickedness everywhere, the vocabulary of hell ; and, therefore, it may always be heard where the emissaries of Satan hold their revelry. At what particular time, or at what stage of his career he contracted this habit, is a matter of no consequence ; but probably, as soon as he became a boon companion of those vile wretches, who, after robbing him of his honor and his money, turned him out of doors to starve or beg. Generally, there is very little order in the accession of these different vices : drinking, swearing, gambling and kindred sins, go together ; they are frequently associated in one character, and practised at one time. If I were to task my ingenuity to the utmost, how could I frame a better argument against the practice, or offer a better reason why a young man who has any regard for his character should avoid it, than the one incidentally referred to ? That it is the language of vice, and that the vicious uniformly interlard their conversation with oaths and blasphemy, is a sufficient reason why it should be left for their exclusive use.

Suppose that the denizens of some locality notorious for its vices, should attempt to introduce customs and manners, styles



of dress and forms of address, would not the simple fact that these had their origin in such a neighborhood, be of itself a sufficient reason why they should be confined within its precincts? Every respectable person would take particular pains to be as dissimilar in all these respects as possible, in order to show that they had no tastes or affinities in common with those degraded beings. So when there is a language peculiar to a class like this, the language of the depraved and the vicious everywhere, should not those who wish to be esteemed virtuous avoid it, as they would the contamination of actual association.

But I leave, for the present, the further consideration of this point, and pass on to speak with more definiteness, of the NATURE AND INFLUENCE OF THIS VICE.

1. There is no sin that more completely obliterates all reverence for God from the heart than this. We never speak irreverently or disrespectfully of those whom we love; nor could we take the name of God in vain, or invoke his awful curses upon ourselves and others, unless the heart were callous to every good impression. The child, with an active conscience, may, by the force of example and long familiarity with these expressions, be lead to adopt them himself; but never, I apprehend, without a struggle. The first oath is uttered with fear and trepidation. It falters upon the lips, and trembles on the tongue, as though the very members of the body revolted at the prostitution of their powers. But soon this hesitancy passes away, the conscience, as well as the ear, becomes paralyzed, and oaths rise involuntarily to the lips. It is self-evident, that a practice like this, in which one of the fundamental laws of God is violated, momentarily, must exert a blighting influence upon the soul, by destroying all reverence for the character and being of God. And when that is gone there is very little foundation left upon which to build a character. This sin, probably, has a most fearful influence in placing the soul where it remains for ever callous to all serious impressions, and thus becomes the cause of its eternal ruin.

2. There are two ways of estimating sin; one is, by its effect upon the individual in his relations to God; the other is, its

influence upon society. As a sin against society it does not interfere with the rights of our fellow men as lying, theft, covetousness and many others do. It is a sin particularly directed against the majesty of God. Yet it has an evil influence in society, which no man of right feelings would be willing to exert. I allude particularly to its influence upon the young. No habit is more easily acquired by children than the habit of using profane language; especially when they hear it from the lips of those whom they regard with respect. When it comes from the grogshop and from the drunkard, this is what they have been taught to expect. Oaths are in keeping with the character of those who use them. But when they hear curses from those with whom their parents associate, those whom they even see with praiseworthy regularity in the house of God, it confuses all their ideas of sin and virtue. It is so directly in conflict with the instructions they receive at home and in the Sabbath school that they are bewildered and amazed. Often do they come to their parents inquiring, "Father is such an individual a good man?" "Why, yes, my child," the father replies, "I believe him to be a very industrious, promising young man. Why do you ask that question?" "Oh, nothing, only I heard him swear!" Now, here is a clincher! It would be very difficult for that parent to explain to his child how one can be a very nice young man and yet a profane swearer, without diminishing, in his estimation, the enormity of the sin. Children make no distinction without a difference; they argue directly to the point, and their conclusions are generally just. There are few parents, with well instructed children, who have not been placed in a similar dilemma to the one supposed. Now I ask you, as a good citizen, if you are willing to exert this kind of influence upon the minds of children who look to you with respect. You may not notice them, but their little ears catch every word you utter, and they sometimes repeat it, when and where you would rather that it should not be heard. And I ask you as a parent, what right you have to corrupt the heart of my child, and destroy in his mind those lessons of morality which it is my duty to give?

It is not the oaths and blasphemies of the vile sot who reels through the streets which exert an influence upon these young minds for evil; because in the character and appearance of the wretch who utters them, they behold a fit commentary and a warning all in accordance with their views of its nature. But it is the oaths and blasphemies of the respectable and otherwise virtuous that do the injury. I would rather a child of mine would hear the whole vocabulary of oaths, with all its transpositions and variations, from the lips of a vile, abandoned outcast, from whose person he would shrink with loathing, than to hear a single oath from one of you who have a character and influence in society. I am aware that it is a practice, sometimes thoughtlessly acquired, and often continued by the mere force of habit. But this is no justification, nor even an extenuation; because habit is a thing voluntarily acquired. It is simply a repetition of the same act so often that it no longer excites attention, and thus the heart becomes an overflowing fountain of corruption, sending forth its poisoned streams to kill and destroy. We are not so charitable toward other sins, especially those that infringe upon our personal rights. Suppose that in passing through a crowd you discover a professional gentleman quietly insinuating his hand into your pocket, for the purpose of abstracting your watch or your money; and being moved by a just indignation, you seize him by the collar, and exclaim, "You thieving vagabond, what do you mean by plundering me of my property?" But instead of quailing before your concentrated wrath, he turns upon you with one of his blindest smiles and says, "O excuse me, sir; I did not intend to wrong you; it is only a habit I have acquired." How does such a plea sound in justification of a sin like this? And suppose that the Great Judge of the Universe were to summon the swearer to answer for the wanton insult he has offered to his majesty, and for the evil influence of his example upon others. Could he say, "O Lord, I pray thee excuse this little sin; thou knowest I meant no harm; it was only a sin of habit!" He never will stand before God with such a plea!

There is another class who commit this sin deliberately, esteeming it a mark of boldness and other manly qualities of which they are sadly deficient by nature. It may seem strange that any person should place such a false estimate upon the nobility of manhood. But, notwithstanding, so it is; and the reason of this is, obviously, because of a false impression as to the nature of these qualities themselves. They have not enough of manhood about them physically, mentally or morally, to know how these noble qualities should develop themselves, and they seize upon this, because it does present at least one human quality, viz., depravity, and that is all. I can easily form the image of one of these small specimens of humanity in my own mind, and perhaps I can describe him to you so that you will recognize him when you meet him. He generally wears very long greasy hair, sometimes slightly twisted at the end, suggesting the idea of a curl. The little down that nature has sprinkled very sparingly upon his upper lip, he has coaxed and twisted, and plastered with various oleaginous compounds, until it really has some remote resemblance to a moustache. He stands before the glass longer than it takes a young lady to make her toilet, and he will brush it one way, and then the other way, in the vain hope of giving it an upward curl at the end. Then he will draw himself up, and knit his brow, and imagine that he looks fierce, like a Spanish brigand, or foreign, like an exiled Hungarian. When all this is completed, he will take a little cane, and put on his little hat, and saunter forth to stare young ladies out of countenance, or with the more cruel intent of damaging their hearts. Listen for a moment to his language, and what do you hear? Why, just what you might expect. Imprecations upon his own soul, and the souls of others. If he attempts such a thing as conversation, the only remarkable thing about it is its extreme silliness and its shocking impiety. Did you never meet this young gentleman in any of your travels? I have encountered him in every railroad car, in every steamboat, at every hotel, and I give you his description as a fair specimen of the class who swear deliberately and willfully, without the presence of passion or emotion, merely as an



evidence of manhood. Young ladies, when you meet him, give him a wide berth, as the sailors say, for he is the most dangerous animal uncaged. I knew one of this class who managed to ingratiate himself in the affections of a respectable and wealthy young lady, and who actually married her. On the very night that he led his bride to the altar, he stole her diamond ring, and the next morning pawned it, to raise money enough to redeem his trunk from the landlord. In less than a week he had relieved his new mother-in-law of the burden of taking care of several valuable articles of silver plate, such as forks, spoons and the like. The last I knew of him he was looking pensively through the bars of a narrow window, upon a little paved court. The prison barber had relieved his countenance of all its fierce, brigand appearance, and, like Sampson shorn of his locks, he was as another man.

I give this warning, not supposing that there is much danger of your being tempted, even if he should make his appearance upon our streets; but unfortunately it is sometimes the case that ladies misjudge respecting the true qualities of manhood, as well as the other sex, and imagine that fine feathers make fine birds. But of one thing you may rest assured, that the young man who will use profane language in your company has no principles, and no respect for you: in either case, you will do well to shun him.

I can bear to hear the hardy son of Neptune swear, with some degree of fortitude, because I know that he really has a brave heart, and I am aware that his associations from his earliest infancy, have been of such a character that he has never regarded the subject in its true aspect; or I can even make allowance for the influence of strong passion; because I know, that here, reason is for the time dethroned. But when I hear one calling himself a man, deliberately and willfully insulting God, by taking his name in vain, for the purpose of mere bravado, I must confess that I feel a disgust and contempt for the creature, which no language can express.

3. But there is another kind of swearing still, that I must notice; or the catalogue will be imperfect. For the sake of



distinction, I shall call it pious swearing; not that there is any real difference in the thing itself, but because it is a form peculiar to those who make a profession of piety, and to whom charity would impute no criminal intent. Its characteristic consists in substituting an adjective for the preposition, as a qualifying word, or, in plain language, instead of saying, "by God," as the wicked swearer does, the pious swearer says, "good God," "good Lord," or "my Lord," as an expression of wonder or astonishment. All that I need to say upon the subject, is, that it is taking the name of God in vain; a practice, unjustifiable and of evil tendency. It has all the characteristics of profanity, and should never be permitted to garnish the conversation of those who hold the being and attributes of God in reverence. But a word to the wise is sufficient.

In conclusion, I wish briefly to show the evil influence which a practice of this kind may have upon a young man's worldly prospects, for there is no doubt but it often exerts a blighting influence upon both his prospects and his success. There are a great many undercurrents in society, that we never notice. Opinions are sometimes formed from slight circumstances, and when once formed are hard to be changed. Often, little events, too trifling to excite our attention, are, in fact, turning points in our destiny. A profane expression, dropped at an unfortunate moment, may block up the way of a young man, and change his whole career, while he is entirely ignorant of the cause. By many it is regarded as *prima facie* evidence of a destitution of principles, and an association with other vices. And why should it not be so esteemed, when it is universally the language of vice? If one of your banks were broken open, and robbed, and an individual were discovered in possession of a large number of the lost bills, would not this fact alone be sufficient to raise a suspicion, that he was in some way accessory to the robbery? So when you observe an individual using the currency of vice, the language of the grog-shop, the gaming-table, a language common to the greatest criminals, and the most abandoned characters, of both sexes, is not this sufficient to excite at least a suspicion, that this is not the only blemish that attaches to his character?

It is said that there is a little animal that attends the king of the forest, and when the traveler beholds one of these, he has reason to walk circumspectly, for he may be assured that the lion is near. So when you observe an individual addicted to profane swearing, you have reason to fear that it is only the forerunner of sins, which, in the estimation of man, are more disreputable than this. The reason is obvious. He who swears has no fear of God in his heart; and he who fears not God, surely need not fear man. I do not mean to assert that such is always the fact, only that the practice of using profane language is sufficient of itself to raise a suspicion that all may not be right, as it respects other habits. Young people are not always sensible of the influence which the opinions of the virtuous and religious may have upon their future career. When an individual wishes to obtain a place of honor or profit, to whom does he apply for recommendations and testimonials? Why, it is to men of character, of influence, and of correct principles—often to the minister of the gospel. And when men wish for information respecting the character and fitness of an individual for a responsible place, to whom do they apply? Why, to the same class? and frequently one word from such a person may place a young man in a position that will lead to wealth and honor, or may blast his hopes, and change his whole course of life.

It is utter folly to affect a contempt for the good opinion of others, especially the virtuous; because without this, however hard a person may struggle, he never can rise above a certain point, and that far below what any young man of proper feelings and ambition should aspire to. As well might he attempt to swim with a millstone about his neck, as to attain influence in society under the frowns of public opinion. Suppose, for example, that here is a gentleman who wishes to retire from active business, and, in seeking some one to fill the place which he is about to vacate, two young men, of equal capacity and qualifications, are suggested to his mind. One of them is free from all bad habits whatever; while the other is shockingly profane in his conversation. Would he not be likely to reason

something like this: One of these young men appears to be very correct in his deportment. I should judge him to be a person of good principles. The other may be equally so; but, from his language, I should infer that he is not very choice in his associates; and he may have contracted other vices, that will make him an unsafe partner. At all events, the man who has the keeping of my money must be above suspicion. This is not a forced construction, by any means; it is just the way any prudent man would reason and act. Thus this evil habit may hang like a dark cloud upon the path, shutting up the door of prosperity in this world, and of salvation in the next. Doubtless many have wondered at the good luck, as they call it, of some who were confessedly their inferiors in talent, and have indulged in bitter and misanthropic reflections over their own failure, when the whole secret lies in the fact that these have secured the confidence and good will of such as had the ability to assist them, while they have foolishly forfeited both.

There are many things behind the scenes, affecting a man's destiny, which he never discovers, but which are operating in a way and with a power that he cannot resist. He finds himself baffled in almost everything he undertakes, and wonders at the reason, when the reason is plain enough to others. He has attempted to defy public opinion, and fallen under the crushing influence of public indignation. These things are so obvious to those who have been placed in circumstances where they could see something of the motion of the undercurrent; or who have stood behind the scenes and observed what was transpiring on the stage of society, who have known the course of certain things of which the actors see only the results; that a mere reference to them is all that is necessary. I could call up witnesses, among the men of influence in this or any other community, who could testify to many facts in corroboration of what I have said. I could refer to letters of inquiry, and of suggestion, of which the subject never had the slightest suspicion. Yet there are many, I fear, who will regard it as only a pulpit fiction, designed to appeal to their self-interest, in order to carry a point or make out a case. True, I have appealed

to your self-interest, because I know this to be the most powerful motive that sways the human heart; and I do nothing more, when I tell you of its final consequences, if persisted in, and unrepented of. The difference is, that one is a present, the other an eternal, motive; and therefore as much more powerful as eternity is greater than time.

It seems to be the most unjustifiable of all the sins which the human soul can commit. It gratifies no natural propensity; it produces no sensual pleasure; it only shows how wantonly and wickedly a man can sin against God. Other sins require time, and a peculiar train of circumstances, to render them practicable; therefore they can only be committed at intervals; but this requires no time, not even the cover of darkness. In business or in pleasure, one may sin as deeply and fatally as the malignant heart of Satan can desire. Of all sins, this must be the one which delights him most.

Could the habitual swearer only see the list of his oaths, as taken down by the pen of the recording angel, he would never suspect that it was the work of a man; but he would suppose that it was the outpouring of some satanic spirit who had devoted all the energies of his mind to the task of reviling his Maker. And though he might be a brave man, his knees would knock like Belshazzar's when he saw the handwriting on the wall; and the pen would drop from his nerveless grasp if he were required to write his signature to the list, and acknowledge it as his deed.

It should be a startling thought, that God may take the swearer at his word, and in eternity pour upon his head those vials of wrath which are as yet unopened. Who would dare to die like that profane wretch who swore, with an awful oath, that he would beat a rival boat, or blow himself to hell, and whose body, in five minutes, was scattered in fragments over the wharf, and whose soul was in the presence of the Being whom he had insulted and defied. What is man that he should dare to provoke the wrath of one who can sweep him into eternity by His breath?



## V. GAMBLING.

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AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 13.*

THE subject of my lecture to-night is one upon which I have had less opportunity for observation, than any of the whole list of vices which often obtain a fatal dominion in the human heart. It is a sin that seeks the cover of darkness, one that is most carefully screened from public observation; therefore those who have never been initiated into its dark mysteries, can know but little except what is manifest from its effects. Neither is it necessary that I should be competent to describe the arts and devices, belonging to the whole complicated system of dishonesty. This has been already exposed, by one who was well qualified to speak from experience, and every man can read for himself. My object is prevention, and not cure, for this I regard as hopeless. Of the secret operations of the gaming-table, I know nothing; but if one were to pass daily, a place where he could see living men go down into dark and gloomy-looking caverns underground, and then behold them daily bearing up their dead bodies; it would require no wonderful degree of shrewdness to infer, that there was some kind of influence or agency at work there destructive of human life; that there was somebody, or something there which killed men. So when we see men of property enter these places, and come out stripped of their wealth, and reduced suddenly to destitution, we can but infer that there is some kind of underground agency at work there, which robs them of their money. A man may learn some things from an observation of what rises to the surface, without going down to explore all the dark caverns and recesses, and noticing the agencies and influences operating there. When we hear of vast sums of money, carefully invested

and secured by a frugal parent, disappearing, like snow in an April sun, under the management of the child, we often hear too that it has been lost at the gaming-table. Or when we see an individual who is looked upon with suspicion and mistrust, whose society is carefully shunned by all who regard their own character, we hear also the secret whispered, as though it were a name too odious to speak aloud, that he is a blackleg. As I was crossing Lake Erie in one of its splendid steamers, having occasion to pass by the saloon, I noticed four men intently occupied at the card table. My curiosity led me to step within the door; for here was a scene such as I had never yet beheld; four desperate gamblers intent upon robbing each other. I must confess that I was somewhat startled and indignant, when I saw that the captain of the boat was one of the number. I soon perceived that he was the victim, but to what extent I could not judge; for they had no money upon the table; but cards cut into small strips which I supposed to be the representatives of money. But I inferred that he was a loser from the fact, that he frequently replenished his tumbler with brandy; while the others drank but little, or nothing. Soon I retired disgusted and indignant that the lives of five hundred people should be committed to a poor drunken, gambling wretch, who soon must be carried to his bed in a state of intoxication. I thought what if a storm should arise, or a fire break out, how can he direct, with coolness and judgment, in such an emergency? This was the very man, who commanded a beautiful and unfortunate boat, which was consumed, when upward of three hundred human beings perished by fire or water. The question has often suggested itself to my mind, whether gambling and drinking might not have had some connection, immediate or remote, with that awful calamity; with some oversight, or some bad arrangement, which a man always cool and sober would have avoided. And I expect yet to hear of a similar catastrophe; and, as usual, a card of thanks and a service of plate voted to the captain for his coolness and courage in the trying emergency. I introduce this incident here to show that gambling, and its consequent dissipation, has more to do with these

awful calamities by fire and water, that are constantly occurring on our western lakes and rivers, than the public are aware of.

But before contemplating the influence of this vice upon the individual character, and upon society, let us direct our attention for a few moments to its nature, and to a consideration of its modified forms, as they prevail to a greater or less extent in almost every community.

1. There is no better way of estimating the morality of an act than by applying to it the great principles of law; for, however the ends of justice may be perverted, by fraud or cunning, the law itself is always a safe criterion by which to test a question of right. Not, indeed, a substitute for the Bible, but a correct exponent of the great principles of righteousness which the Bible contains.

It is a universal principle of law, that no contract is valid where money or property of any kind is given without an equivalent, or a consideration, as the law defines it. All transactions are regarded as fraudulent, and nothing can be recovered by legal process, whatever may be the letter of the contract, where there is no evidence of a consideration. This principle, then, settles at once the morality of all those minor forms of gambling, such as betting, lottery schemes, and the like, as well as the more complicated and systematic operations of the gaming-table. Here is the great principle by which their morality, as well as their legality, may be tested; but so general, that it embraces many other transactions which do not fall within the strict definition of gambling.

This I should define to be the hazarding of property on an uncertain event or contingency, which, of course, comes within the scope of the general principle already referred to, of receiving money or property without returning an equivalent. Let us apply this definition first, by supposing two careworn looking gentlemen seated directly opposite each other at a small table, and between them is deposited a sum of money, of which each owns an equal share. In their hands they hold pieces of pasteboard, covered over with mysterious hieroglyphics, which they eye with the most intense interest. Now we will

suppose that, upon the turning up of a particular character or number upon one of these, the event of which is equally uncertain to both, depends the ownership of that money. This is gambling in its fairest or most honest form, if I may be allowed the paradox, because there is no trickery or deception used, by which the result is made certain.

Then let us suppose another, and in some respects a parallel case. Here is a certain future event, dependent upon contingencies, the result of which no human wisdom or forethought can divine. It may be success of a political candidate, and upon this event the ownership of a sum of money, deposited in the hands of a third person, depends. This is betting. Now, how do these transactions differ in their nature? Will not exactly the same principle that tests the morality of the one, place the other in the same category? Will not the same definition that describes the one, define the other with equal clearness and precision? First, money received without rendering an equivalent; second, the ownership is dependent upon an uncertain event. This is the nature of the transaction in both cases, and it matters not whether that uncertain event be the turning of a card, or a die, or the speed of a horse, or the weight of an ox, or the election of a President. There may be a difference in the characters of the men who practice these different kinds of gambling; but this will not change the character of the act. Nor is it safe to overstep the dividing line between a life of strict morality and dishonesty, because there is no telling how far astray it may lead a person before he is really aware of his danger. When principle ceases to oppose a barrier to what is wrong, there is no security against a departure from the line of rectitude until the individual is guilty of the most wicked and corrupt practices.

This is a branch of the subject which should not be passed without reference to its evil influences upon society, as well as upon the character of the individual. The future glory and destiny of our country depend upon the purity and patriotism of those who are soon to act an important part upon the political stage. And the young man who begins his political life by this



species of gambling, will most likely become an unscrupulous, unprincipled demagogue. We cannot meet these responsibilities, so as to secure to those who are to come after us the sacred trust that we have received, if we are actuated by base and mercenary motives. Patriotism, and not money, should be our governing motive. A man who has staked his property upon the result of an election, will not hesitate to employ the most unjustifiable means to accomplish his ends. Bribery, corruption and iniquity, in every form, will characterize the efforts of this class. The most reckless gamblers become the most zealous politicians, carrying with them into the election, all the base and malignant passions of the gaming-table. These are your pure-minded politicians, whose patriotic breasts burn with holy indignation against those who, in acting according to their conscientious convictions of duty, oppose their interests, not because of principles, but because their money is at stake. The evil then is not one that is confined to its influence upon the individual character; but it is one which threatens to subvert the very foundation upon which our government is based.

Thus far, we have supposed that all these hazards, which characterize every species of gambling, were of a kind in which the parties stood an equal chance of success. But whoever imagines that the professed gambler leaves anything to chance, is yet in that happy state where "ignorance is bliss." We are informed by those who are acquainted with all the secret operations of the gaming-table, that every card is known to the gambler, by the back as well as by its face; and that the whole system is but a complicated calculation, by which the results are obtained with the utmost certainty. As much so as a lottery scheme, or an insurance policy, or any other system based upon chance. If the intended victim is ever permitted to go away with his prize, it is regarded only as a loan, to be repaid at a ruinous interest, done merely to inflame covetousness, or increase his self-assurance, that he may venture his stakes in larger sums.

There are two classes of gamblers, those who make it a business, or a profession, and those who are their dupes. One to do the plucking, and one who has the feathers to be plucked.

The plucker and the pluckee. It would never do for professed gamblers to turn upon and devour each other, for this would end like the tale of the Kilkenny cats; therefore, they must continually seek new resources, or discover new victims, among those who, like the young prodigal, have obtained their patrimony. These they flatter and cajole, and permit to win small sums, until they entertain exalted ideas of their own shrewdness, and then suddenly strip them of all they are worth and all that they can borrow from others.

I cannot, if I would, depict the course of the gambler after he comes fully under the influence of this vice, when every principle of honesty, and virtue, and honor have been rooted from the heart, and the whole company of affiliated vices admitted there. Their work is like that of hyenas in the graveyard, to destroy the last lineament of humanity. It is a vice, which, more than any other, calls into exercise all the other vices to complete the work of destruction. Covetousness, greedy frenzied covetousness, is its motive. Profanity its technical language, the wine cup its proper stimulus, and lust its presiding genius; while hatred, revenge and malignity are the passions engendered; and murder and suicide its common results. How many have gone from the gaming-table into eternity, either by their own hand, or by the hand of one of their associates? For it is an admitted fact, that the winner of a large sum seldom carries away his ill-gotten treasure from the gambling-house. He is either drugged and then robbed, or actually murdered. "Found drowned," or "died by the visitation of God," is generally the verdict of the coroner in such cases! And it is the visitation of God, in one sense. It is one of those awful retributions, which are operating continually in his government, by which we have demonstrated to us, even in this world, that "The wages of sin is death." But this vice, like all others, has a beginning, and it is here that we must seek to apply the remedy. A man does not start up all at once an accomplished and unscrupulous gambler. There is invariably a gradual departure from the line of rectitude; a love for the excitement of play developed by degrees, which, if

unchecked, ends in a most uncontrollable passion. Even after the barrier of strict integrity has been overleaped, and the fatal career commenced, there is sometimes a point when a moderate degree of firmness would save a man. A recent author gives a striking instance of this; he says: "A friend of mine, now a distinguished member of the bar at the east, told me, that on returning from court in a neighboring county, after having gained his first suit, it was proposed among the company—mostly lawyers and officers of the court—to gamble. He joined with others, and lost all his own funds. He had with him a large sum of one of his clients. In the excitement of the moment he staked a part of that and lost it, and at length, by resorting to another game most ferocious in its nature, he succeeded in winning back the whole. No sooner had he done this, than the position in which he had placed himself, and the infernal influence of the practice by which he was induced to hazard the funds of another, and thereby risk the bankruptcy of his own character and his client's purse, were vividly impressed upon him. He arose from the table. He was a man of great sternness of purpose, and although a youth among his seniors, he declared, 'Gentlemen, this is the last game of chance I ever play. I gamble no more.' He stopped upon the verge of ruin."

Many others have done so when there was a determined will, a character, and some remnant of principle left. But if this man had ended the game a loser, and thereby had ruined his character for honesty by squandering the money of his client, would he then have taken the course he did to save himself? The only safe place to drive down a stake, as a fixed point, or a boundary line that cannot be passed, is at the very commencement. The rule should be, never to play for a copper; never to give or receive money where a great principle of honesty is violated; then a man places himself above temptation. When assailed by the tempter, he should say, with firmness and decision of manner, "Gentlemen, I never bet;" "Gentlemen, I never gamble." It would be better for him if he could say with truth, "I don't know one card from another." If a young man

has decision of character enough for this, he will easily escape the snares of those prowling miscreants who are seeking victims among the young, and who would even tempt them to be dishonest, that they may steal it again. They are good judges of character, and they will soon learn such a subject, and select for their prey one that is destitute of fixed principles, and who may easily be led by the artful. The place where this work of self-destruction commences is generally in the small social circle; often in company with those who should be the last to encourage a love for this dangerous amusement. If young ladies could only see the awful consequences to themselves, which may result from an innocent game of whist, they would never countenance the card table. Most of them are sisters; they have brothers, dear and cherished. Some have others who will one day sustain a nearer relation than this! What anguish may wring their hearts, if one of them were to sink so low as to become a gambler, an outlaw, a companion for burglars, highwaymen and murderers! A gambler's wife! What an object of pity! You can choke up a stream at its fountain, and turn its course by a slight obstruction; but, when it has gathered to itself other streams, and becomes a torrent, rolling and foaming down the mountain side, it will sweep away every obstacle; nothing can resist its mighty tide.

Perhaps there are some who will say that these games, which are indulged in the social circles, are not the kind that are used in gambling. These depend more upon skill,—those more upon chance. Whoever asserts that the game of whist, which, I believe, is the one most usually chosen in the social circle, is never used for the purpose of gambling, must be strangely ignorant of the customs of society in what we sometimes call "high life." It is the great gambling game among the aristocracy of Europe, and European customs find swift imitators in this country. Nor is it confined to one sex; females, perhaps I should say ladies, often play for ruinous stakes, and become as inveterate gamblers as their husbands. It is the common practice in large companies, when the younger portion begin to arrange themselves upon the floor for the purpose of commencing their midnight revelry,



then the rich old dowagers, with high caps and ribbons, and the stiffened up old rakes, who can no longer "bend the pregnant hinges of the knee" in the dance, retire to convenient rooms, and commence their work of robbery, under the name of amusement, with all the eagerness of professed gamblers. You may see one of these ancient dames peering through her spectacles, to watch the course of the game, as the cat watches the motion of her intended victim; and when the result is declared, she will reach out her hand, like the claw of a harpy, and clutch the shining gold, with all the avidity and tenacity of the miser. Wo be to the simpleton who sits down, thinking he is only to play for amusement; it will prove the dearest amusement that he ever purchased.

But if it were true that this and similar games were never used for other purposes than diversion, we may inquire if the love for this kind of excitement does not lead to a love for other games, still more exciting, because of the money at stake. I knew a Christian parent who was in the habit of joining with his children in games of cards and backgammon, and who contended that it was at least an innocent amusement for long winter evenings. Soon his eldest son attained the age when it was necessary for him to leave the paternal roof, and with bright prospects he entered upon his college career.

But so inveterate was his love of cards, as yet only used as a source of amusement, that after repeated warnings and admonitions he was suspended for a transgression of the college rules in this respect. He then commenced the study of law, and in a few years obtained a lucrative practice. Money was entrusted to his charge, and with the possession of the means came the overpowering temptation to indulge in other games, not so innocent in their character, and his father soon had large sums of money to pay in order to save him from utter disgrace and perhaps a prison. With a character seriously damaged he still managed, through the influence of wealthy friends, to secure a traveling agency of considerable importance. He visited the various places on the great western thoroughfare, and for a while his returns were made with punctuality. But, alas! in an

evil hour he fell among thieves in one of our southwestern cities, who stripped him of money, watch and of every thing he possessed, and he died suddenly, of cholera, it was said, without a dollar upon his person to buy him a shroud. Strangers threw him into a hastily dug grave, and thus ended the career of as noble hearted a youth as ever excited a father's hope or drew forth a mother's tears. Every one may draw their own inferences; but I would not have the harrowing reflection that as a parent I might have directly, or indirectly, contributed to such a result, for all the wealth of a Rothschild. We are taught to pray that we may not be led into temptation; and if we would escape this, we should avoid all games that may be employed for dishonest purposes. And as parents we should keep the knowledge of them from our children; this is the surest way to guard them against the power of the tempter.

I remark, in view of what has been presented to our minds, that there is nothing so fatal to a man's prospects in this world as the reputation of being a gambler. For an individual to rise in society; or to be successful in business, he must obtain the confidence of those who have it in their power to assist him. No man can ever struggle successfully with the great current that is constantly moving him downward, unless he obtains the good will of those with whom he is associated. And who can repose confidence in the gambler? When we know that such is the strength of this vice, that thousands who otherwise would have been honest and respectable citizens, have, through its influence, squandered not only their own property, but have violated the most sacred trust, and sacrificed that of others; thus integrity, reputation, money and worldly prospects have been engulfed in a common ruin. This is pre-eminently a bad name; and a suspicion of a practice like this will hedge up the way when the individual seeks a place of honor or trust. It will meet him, when he requires that kind of assistance which every business man is sometimes obliged to seek. It will oppose him, when he desires to form that connection, which more than any other will affect his happiness. By shutting up the doors to an honest business, it leaves but one path open, and

that is the way of the transgressor. It will dog him, like his shadow down to the grave, and enshrine his name with infamy.

Who are those that are associated together by a mysterious tie, and whose band of brotherhood is community of crime; and whose business it is to forge, counterfeit, rob and murder? They are such as in early life obtained the reputation of gamblers; and to whom as a consequence every avenue to a respectable business was closed. The awful frown of public opinion withered them until they shrunk away to dark places, and resorted to baser practices. And who are those that, under the influence of the most agonizing remorse, have retired to some solitude and there ended their disgraceful career, by a more disgraceful death; feeling, as one expressed it, that hell would be his just doom, but that there could be no worse hell than the one in which he lived, nor worse devils than his associates in crime. He may have been right, so far as it regarded his own case, for probably his soul was as completely under the influence of remorse and despair, as are the souls of the lost. His misery was greater than he could endure.

But who pities the gambler? The drunkard has sympathy, because he is his own worst enemy. The gambler has curses, because he is society's greatest curse. I knew a gambler to die once, suddenly and awfully; and many good citizens said, that they were glad of it. It was a blessing to society to have him removed. And they were right. When the gambler dies, there follow him the imprecations of his poor ruined victims who are treading in his steps, but feel that they have no power to turn their course. There follow him the execrations of wives, who have been robbed of their husbands, and whose husbands have robbed them to pursue their course of ruin. There follow him the curses, deep and bitter, of gray-headed parents, who go sorrowing down to the grave, because their hope has been ruined for time and eternity, and has ruined them in turn. There follow him the thanksgivings of an outraged community, that is relieved of a common enemy who was continually robbing them of their money, and of that which was more precious than money. Who drops a tear upon the

gambler's grave? Who plants a shrub, and watches and nurses the budding flower where his carcass lies? Not one; his name and his memory are alike hateful to all who cherish virtue, and detest vice. Tremble, young man, when your fingers first touch the wages of unrighteousness; for this may be your fate.

But I cannot close without directing your thoughts, for a moment, to the consequences of such a life, beyond the grave. This, and its affiliated vices are not those harmless and innocent amusements, which indicate a mere excess of animal spirits, and that time and an experience of the trials of life will cure. They are vices that grow with the growth, and strengthen with the development of character, and which if indulged in will most certainly exclude the soul from heaven. If they are execrated by society here, how can their possessors be admitted into the society of those pure spirits that never sinned, and of the just made perfect, and of God the source of purity and holiness? "And there shall in no wise enter into it, that is the Heavenly City, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." \* \* \* "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Which is the fitting place for those whose whole life is fraud and deception? Judge ye! Dream not of happiness here; or heaven hereafter, until your hearts are fitted to find that happiness, in those pursuits and pleasures which have no sting.

Other considerations, such as reputation, success and the restraints of public opinion may keep you from open immorality; but nothing but true virtue, and the implanting of those principles, which are the work of God's Almighty Spirit and Grace, can so renovate the heart, as to secure your ultimate happiness. Seek religion then, as the great safeguard and bulwark of defense against vice; and seek it now, before evil habits have worn their furrows so deep in your heart, that nothing can obliterate them.

If you have been interested in following me, as I have attempted to depict those scenes in which this young prodigal participated, until he was reduced to that situation of awful



destitution and wretchedness, which I am yet to describe; and if, in reviewing your own life, and examining your own heart, you find yourself obnoxious to any of these charges, I beg that you will follow him when I shall turn the picture, and trace his course homeward, with abasement, repentance and tears, and resolve that you will make his case your own. That as he found peace and happiness, in the kind embraces of a reconciled father; so you will give yourself no rest, until you find it in the bosom of your reconciled God.

## VI. INTEMPERANCE.

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AND THERE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE WITH RIOTOUS LIVING.—*Luke xv: 13.*

PERHAPS it will be thought that I have followed the course of this wayward and dissipated young man far enough; that the scenes of debauchery in which I have supposed him to participate, are already sufficient to answer the description of the parable, and that it is time for him to turn his face homeward. But the work of ruin is not yet complete. True, he has vices enough to debase him to the lowest depths of depravity. He has already run up a fearful score against his character, and were he to be called to an account just as he is, it would be a terrible reckoning. Yet there is one thing still wanting to make the wreck complete, and we are not justified in supposing that he was reduced to those circumstances of abject wretchedness in which the parable places him, without the agency of one more vice.

Doubtless he often had moments of remorse, and in the solitude of the night, or when the excitement of dissipation had passed off, he would think of the happy home and the innocent pleasures that he had left, and would sigh as he contrasted his present situation with what it had been. The instructions of childhood, the offices of love, performed by those whose affections he had spurned, all would rush upon his memory with overpowering force, and drive him, in very desperation, to still wilder scenes of recklessness and folly.

But so long as the means of procuring this excitement lasted, these reflections could only serve to render him the more desperate. There was one thing still necessary, one depth of degradation still lower to be attained, before his frenzied intellect

could grasp the true condition in which he had placed himself. And there was only one that could so completely finish the work as to leave him no alternative but to pursue the course that he finally adopted, or starve, and that was intemperance,—the subject to which I now wish to direct your thoughts. I ask myself in the commencement, what can I say that is new, upon a subject that has for so long a time enlisted the talents of the most eloquent men of our land? or how can I present it in a way that my message shall not seem like a thrice-told tale. I look forward along the track that I propose to follow, and can discern no bright spot, no ray of light to enliven the dark picture which I must present to your view.

The work of intemperance is emphatically the work of death, and in dealing with it, we are obliged to pass through scenes of desolation, of sighing, and of blood. It may be, and often has been, presented in connection with incidents and anecdotes, ridiculous enough in their character to excite the mirth of an audience; but we should remember that even this is the work of death, and that if these scenes can present anything amusing, it is because reason—the noble prerogative of man—is dethroned, and he has, for the time being, reduced himself to the condition of an idiot.

No wife ever saw anything diverting in the grotesque appearance, and drawling speeches of an intoxicated husband. It may afford amusement to indifferent spectators, but is death to all her hopes and her happiness. No parent ever found occasion for merriment in the drunkenness of a child. He would as soon laugh while they were lowering his dead body into the grave, as to laugh at this living death; more to be dreaded even than the work of the grim adversary who has power over the body only. I have not the heart, even if I possessed the ability, to treat of this subject only as one suggestive of solemn and melancholy reflection; for probably many of those who hear me have experienced indirectly something of the bitterness of this curse, and feel anything but a disposition to be amused at its development.

The time was, when the efforts of temperance men and temperance lecturers were directed to arouse public attention and to the creation of a correct public sentiment. But after sufficient information had been communicated, and enlightened public opinion was against the custom of using alcoholic drinks; when the decanter was banished from the side-board, and the brandy cask from the cellar of the temperate citizen, the attention of philanthropists was very properly directed to measures designed to suppress the traffic. But, perhaps, in discussing these collateral questions, we have lost sight, in a great measure, of the principle upon which all restrictive measures must be based, which is, that intemperance is a deadly sin; a sin, too, of a threefold nature as committed against the individual, against society, and against God. For it is upon the truth of this proposition that we derive our right to interfere with the business of those who are engaged in the manufacture or sale of that which produces it. I propose, then, to go back to the consideration of the "first principles of our faith," in the hope that I may be able to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

The proper way to estimate a vice is by observing its ultimate effects, when the subject completely abandons himself to its dominion. We are not to judge of the evils of intemperance by an observation of those who have just commenced a career of dissipation, and who indulge only in choice wines and the purest liquors, and who fall only occasionally under its power. These are as yet in the initiatory stage. But we are to look at the poor miserable trembling wretch who is already tottering on the verge of eternity, through its agency; we are to observe the appearance and character of the bloated, blotched, ugly, old whiskey toper, who robs his sick wife of her last sixpence; and here we have presented to our view the true character of the vice.

A man never becomes completely ruined in mind, body and estate, without the agency of this habit. Other vices may impair them all; but it is this which puts on the finishing touch, because it dethrones reason and causes him to cease to feel and act like a man. It levels all distinction between man



and man, and between man and beast. While under its influence he has no intellect to perceive and judge, no conscience to restrain, no sensibilities to be shocked; and thus he comes under the dominion of the wicked and designing.

1. Let us contemplate this subject for a few moments as a sin against the INDIVIDUAL'S OWN BEING, or a direct violation of those laws which preserve the system in a state of health. Everything in God's universe is naturally harmonious. This law of harmony prevails in the great planetary system. In the ten thousand invisible agencies that are silently but perfectly carrying out the designs of Infinite Wisdom. It prevails also in the human system, where its operations are not interrupted by disease, or impaired by the influence of those agencies which are the result of human folly or human wickedness. In a state of health the body may be compared to a beautiful piece of machinery, in which you observe the turning of various wheels and cylinders, all in harmony; each performing its revolutions in its proper time; there is no sudden and erratic movement, no confusion, no jarring nor grinding of one wheel against another, but silently and beautifully it moves together while the great balance wheel gives steadiness and uniformity to the whole. Remove this, and in an instant the perfect harmony is destroyed, and, like a creature mad with rage, it will roll with tenfold power until it wrecks itself by its own velocity.

The God of nature has thus constituted the human system, and whatever destroys the balance of its different organisms exposes the whole fabric to destruction. If a steam-engine were so constructed that it were capable of sustaining only a given pressure, and with this amount of pressure all its parts move with harmony and with strength, what must be the consequence of adding to it tenfold more power? So, if the Divine Architect has established a certain ratio between the pulsations of the heart and the respirations of the lungs, sending the vital fluid from the one to the other just as fast as it can be purified and fitted for the purposes of animal life, what must be the consequence of pouring into that system a fluid that increases the first and diminishes the last, thus driving noxious blood through

all the various tissues of the frame? That this is the constant and unfailing result of stimulating drinks in health, where the harmony of the system is perfect, is the testimony of every one acquainted with the laws and structures of the body, and confirmed, too, by the most superficial observation; for we often see a degree of excitement bordering on frenzy, and a few hours afterward behold the same man drooping, nerveless and trembling, as though he had suffered from severe protracted disease. Of all the inventives which the ingenuity of man has devised for producing the rapid disorganization of the structures of the human body, none have equaled in their terrible power and success the introduction of alcohol, in its various forms. It has been like adding another to that fatal curse which doomed our race in the day of the fall. Had we never seen such a thing as intoxication, we should suppose that these effects indicated the accession of some awful disease, which must soon terminate life. I have in my mind a very pertinent illustration of this fact, which I will narrate to you, although somewhat at the expense of my own reputation as a man of discernment.

When I commenced the practice of medicine\* in a New England village, young in years and in experience, I was summoned at the dead hour of night, in great haste, to see a young man who was suddenly taken with the most alarming symptoms. I found the patient in what physicians call a comatose state, a condition bordering upon apoplexy. He was insensible, his respiration very slow and heavy, face flushed and almost purple, pulse full, and beating with that peculiar force and strength which denotes imminent danger. I was at once apprehensive of serious consequences, and about to resort to the most obvious mode of relief, when it was suggested that he had eaten heartily of greens for his supper, and that perhaps some poisonous herb might have been mingled with them. Here was a cue at once to the nature of the disease: the young man was undoubtedly poisoned! I changed my course and proceeded to administer an active emetic, and in the meantime dispatched a messenger for a stomach-pump and the apparatus necessary in

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\* The author's original profession was that of a physician,

such emergencies. Contrary to my expectations, the stomach responded to my remedies, and ejected large quantities of a dark, suspicious-looking fluid, which, on careful analysis, proved to be, not a decoction of deadly nightshade or stramonium, hyosciamus or any of the noxious plants which grow indigenously on our soil, but something more potent than either. It was nothing more nor less than New England rum and molasses. It is hardly necessary to add that I did not resort to more active treatment after this development.

Heretofore, he had been a young man of irreproachable character; besides, he had a young wife and aged parents, and I thought that it would be no relief to them to learn the true nature of the case; for this reason I directed cold water to the head and mustard drafts for the feet, and left him convalescing. I do not introduce this incident for the purpose of diversion, but to show how alarming the symptoms of intoxication really are, where we are unsuspicious of the cause; and that it is nothing but our familiarity with them that prevents us from appreciating their true character.

Many seem to think and act as though they had a perfect right to trifle with and destroy that which God has so fearfully and wonderfully made, for the residence of our immortal spirit, to develop its intellectual and moral qualities, and to prepare it for a glorified existence hereafter. But we are to glorify him with our bodies as well as with our spirits, and we can only do this when we observe those laws which are established for their preservation. If God has given life, man has no right to throw it away as worthless. If he has endowed him with a reasonable soul, he sins against God and himself when he dethrones reason and reduces himself to a mere animal. If he has created him but one degree removed from the angelic grade, it is the greatest conceivable insult to his Maker to debase himself until no vestige of his nobility remains. How would it appear in heaven if an angel were to disrobe himself of that glory in which he was created, to incapacitate himself for the worship and offices which pertain to his nature, and become a dark, deformed nondescript, an animal, a mere thing, amid the

bright circle of angelic worshipers? Yet this is what man does when he divests himself of all the prerogatives of manhood, and descends so low in the depths of infamy as to be incapable of answering any of the ends of his being to society.

This is the nature of the sin which the inebriate commits against the laws of his own being. And were my object merely to illustrate its disorganizing and ruinous effects upon the physical man, I might easily consume the time that I have allotted to myself for this lecture, and then leave the subject at the very threshold. But this I cannot regard as necessary. It is one that is fearfully presented to the observation of every man; and its influence, both immediate and remote, is demonstrated to be evil, and only evil continually. If we turn our thoughts back, and for a moment recall the past, we shall remember that when we were children there was then upon the stage a generation of drunkards, who were to be seen reeling through the streets; men in the prime or meridian of life, but bowed under many infirmities. Perhaps we followed them in derision, or upon errands of mercy we visited their desolate homes. Where is that generation now? How many of them are left to curse their families and disgrace humanity? To a man they have been swept into eternity. He who lives in the daily violation of any of God's natural laws, outstrips the flight of time and prematurely buries himself in the abyss of eternity. Twenty years, or even ten, are amply sufficient to sweep from the stage a whole generation of drunkards.

2. But man is not an isolated being, bound only to consult his own individual happiness. He is a SOCIAL BEING, and as such sustains relations to others and to society which he cannot disregard without sinning against them. If he is a husband and a father, God holds him responsible for the manner in which he fills that most important place in the social system. In the constitution of society, and by the ordinance of Heaven, there are others who are dependent upon him for their happiness, yea, for their very subsistence. Their position in the social scale is regulated by his. Their education, secular and religious, is to be directed by him, and the influence of his example is the



most powerful agent which can be brought to bear upon the development of their character.

I am aware that the class to whom I wish particularly to address my remarks do not, as yet, sustain these relations; but probably many are looking forward, with some degree of eagerness, to the time when they will. Few, if any, expect to perform the journey of life without a companion to cheer, or a heart to sympathize. The comforts of a home and the luxuries of the domestic fireside are of such a nature that few are willing to forego them all to live a life of solitude and die unwept.

It is in anticipation of this, as a future event in your history, that I wish to show the awful consequences of entering upon such a relation with that appetite already formed, which will turn every affection of the heart to bitterness, and change the greatest blessing into the greatest curse. It is now, while your characters are developing, that these habits take that insidious hold, which will subsequently, it may be many years hence, bring every affection and sensibility under their power. And I affirm that no man is competent to fill this important place in the social system, who has contracted a love, however slight, for the excitement of drink; for it will overpower and quench every other love. This is not a question that admits of argument, for we may turn to the facts and see demonstrated before our eyes the manner in which the intemperate man fills the place of a husband and a father.

Whose wife is this that walks the streets sallow and shivering with scarce clothing enough for decency, to say nothing of comfort? Whose children are these that come begging at our door, ignorant, vicious, profane and ragged? Whose house is that where rags and old hats protrude through the windows, and pigs wallow at the doors, and smoke and steam and oaths issue from the numerous crevices? Will you enter this abode of vice and wretchedness? Draw up your dress and step high, if you are a lady, lest you become contaminated by the filth accumulated at the threshold. And now what do you see there? A pale and forlorn looking creature at the wash-tub, her only resource, and the avails of which she is obliged to

secrete from her husband. A sick child in the cradle, moaning, and almost choked with smoke and steam, wrapped up in a complication of old coats and petticoats, and rags and filth. Another child screaming at the door with red hands and redder feet, and a little ragged slip which scarce covers his bare legs. An indefinite number of half starved dogs at the most comfortable places by the fireside. The husband at the grog-shop, and the older children polishing off their education by dividing their time between the grog-shop and the street. This is the drunkard's home, and this the way that he fills his place in the social system. These people did not commence life thus. When she married him he was industrious and kind, and for the most part temperate; but the appetite was there, the habit already acquired, and what you now behold is only its full development.

And here, young ladies, I have a word of advice and warning for you. I am aware that it is a thankless task to advise in matters where the heart is concerned, but O, what is a love worth, that in a few years will be overpowered by so base, and selfish an appetite? Ladies sometimes flatter themselves that their influence will be sufficient to overcome this passion and produce reformation; but there can be no greater mistake committed than to trust your happiness for life to such a delusive hope as this. Facts are all against such a supposition, and only serve to show that, where the appetite for intoxicating drinks is formed, the change of circumstances by the new relation will only check it for a season, to break out again with accumulated power and ruinous consequences.

It is often said of this class of husbands, and it is doubtless true of some, though not of all, that when they are themselves they are unusually kind and obliging. But what is this kindness worth, when they will sacrifice the happiness of the whole family, mortify the wife, until, disconsolate and broken-hearted, she retires from society, desiring neither to see nor to be seen by her associates, and beggar the children, rather than forego the gratification of his own selfish appetite? If this is true affection, then it would be hard to define its reverse. The man

who really loves his wife and children with disinterested affection will make sacrifices for them, he will deprive himself of many things that he would like to possess, that he may contribute to their happiness and well being. Judged by this rule, then, there is no heart in the universe so really cruel and unfeeling and supremely selfish as that of the drunkard. I am strenuous upon this point, because I believe he has often had a reputation to which he has no just title. That the partiality of affection often leads to an over-estimate of little things, which in another would be regarded only as matters of course.

The hangman is generally kind and affable while he puts the rope around the neck of the prisoner, but he hangs him for all that. So the drunkard in his intervals of dissipation may have turns of sensibility, made the more manifest by the presence of remorse. Nothing is too good for his wife then, no parent more affable and fond toward his children than he; but he ruins them all together, notwithstanding, so far as his agency goes. He has put the rope around their necks and he is tightening it all the time. And he will see them all plunged into the lowest abyss of shame and degradation before he will forego his own gratification. If these things are true, how carefully should the female part of society guard themselves against permitting their affections to become enlisted toward an improper object.

A young lady should no more entertain the thought of forming a connection with one of this class, than with a gambler, or a burglar. And when a young gentleman is pouring sentimentalities about love and future bliss into her ear, and the fumes of brandy into her nose at the same breath, she should ask him to take himself away, his head should never come near enough to that of any virtuous female to poison her with the fumes of the whiskey-tub. Beware of the man who carries this undisguisable mark of his secret habit! He may fill his mouth with cloves, cardamom or lozenges, but if he drinks brandy, it will be distinguished above them all, and the secret will out.

I cannot suppose it to be true of any of my present audience, but I have known young ladies so far forget themselves as to

countenance their friends of the other sex in drinking wine and other intoxicating drinks at saloons and at private entertainments, by drinking with them. And I have seen the consequence in what seemed to be a just retribution. And I address myself particularly to you, because your happiness is at stake, and you may be made to suffer all that this vice can inflict, merely from want of proper admonition and caution. I address myself to you too, because your influence in the social circle now, can do more in saving your associates who are in danger, than all the preaching and lecturing in the world. You can preach a sermon that may have a practical application; let your text be temperance, or single blessedness. And rely upon it, that it will be blessedness indeed, in comparison to being chained to a drunkard, to being a drunkard's wife, to living in a drunkard's home. In barbarous times one of the most cruel punishments devised by the malignity of man, was to tie the culprit hand to hand, foot to foot, face to face, to a swollen and putrid corpse, and leave him thus to perish. And I can find no illustration more expressive of the true nature of the relation which the virtuous wife sustains to the drunkard.

I would not speak thus had I not seen its awful consequences over and over again. And as a parent, I believe that I can say with truth, that I would rather see a son of mine brought home a corpse, than in a state of beastly drunkenness, did I know that this was to be the commencement of a drunken career. Or, if I had a daughter fair and lovely, I would rather follow her body to the grave, than to the altar, and see her wedded to a drunkard. These are strong assertions, but I can find parents who have experienced both these trials, who will confirm emphatically what I say.

This is only one relation which a man sustains to society, as a component part of the great social system, but as it is by far the most important, I pass the others by and proceed to remark :

3. That drunkenness is a sin that will most assuredly EXCLUDE THE SOUL FROM THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

There is no sin more repeatedly and emphatically denounced in the Word of God than this. I need not repeat all the denun-



ciatory expressions which are used to describe his doom; it is sufficient to refer to the fact that drunkenness is uniformly placed in the same category as murder, theft, idolatry, and other crimes of the blackest character. Moreover, it declares in the most positive terms that the drunkard shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

As far back as the days of Moses it is said of this character that the Lord will not spare him, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. Aside from these, how can such an individual stand before God in the day of judgment to answer for the manner in which he has filled his place in society? He may have had parents who needed his support; or at least who had anticipated comfort and happiness in their declining years from his society, and from the gratification of their parental pride. And how has he repaid all that solicitude and self-denial with which they reared him for a place of usefulness? Is there a scene more heart-rending than to see a parent stricken and riven like the mighty oak, scathed by heaven's lightning, as he beholds his hopes all blasted and the child of promise descending into a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell? Or, God may have given him a Christian wife, whose example and influence would have led him into the way of life, had he not constantly resisted, yea, and abused her, because of her meek and gentle reproof. His children, to whom he should have been an example of virtue and sobriety, may have, through his neglect, or worse than this, his crime, grown up in ignorance and vice, to multiply into a whole generation like themselves.

How can we estimate the evil which one such member of society may do, for it terminates not with his own guilty career, but may be perpetuated for many generations. How, then, can such a man hope for favor at the tribunal of heaven? Nor is there a rational expectation of his seeking mercy by repentance. The spirit of God cannot dwell in the same breast with the spirit of a demon. Oaths and curses and prayers do not mingle well in the incense which the heart sends up to heaven. If his

breast is ever touched by feelings of remorse, it only drives him to the bottle and not to the closet, to the bar-room or grog-shop, but never to the house of God. The very excitement in which he lives drowns all serious reflections, and then benumbs all the religious and moral sensibilities. No, the drunkard cannot repent so long as he pursues his course in direct violation of every law, natural, social and moral. His first step must be reformation, and then there is hope. But will he be likely to do this? Or if he seems to be changed for a season, will he persevere to the end and be saved? Often do these apparent reformations prove in the end like the man out of whom the devil had been cast, but who afterwards took unto himself seven other spirits more wicked; "and the last state was worse than the first."

If these things are so—and who can deny their truth?—you perceive the importance of taking a proper position in relation to this great question of our day. The remedy lies not in the law, for no law can ever be framed that shall render it impossible for a man to become a drunkard. Law may do much in preventing temptation, but it can never put it out of your power to ruin yourself if you will. The remedy lies within yourself; in the stand you take at the commencement of active life. If you leave yourself to be guided by circumstances, there is no security against your being led away by temptation. It is not safe to flatter yourself that you can regulate and control an appetite that is once formed; for you cannot be aware of the strength and power of that habit until it is too late.

Many mightier men than any of us have fallen under its power. So long as the hopes and prospects of youth buoy up the spirits, a man may perhaps restrain his appetite within certain bounds; but let disappointment come, and that deep dejection which results from expectations blasted, and see how fearfully rapid will be the strides which he takes to the last crowning scene of misery and shame. And when I hear of a young man who has once fallen under the power of temptation, I regard him as already in the net which the enemy has spread for his

soul, and every repetition is like forging for himself a new link in the chain which is to bind that soul in everlasting chains. How often does the inebriate perceive, in his moments of reflection, the ruin which is impending! How does he resolve, and re-resolve, with the big tears of penitence rolling down his cheek, that he will break the fatal spell! But, alas! habit is the master, and he the slave.

Could I take a young man of this audience by the hand and show him the drunkard in his wretched home, stretched upon a bed of penitence and death, surrounded by everything that can harrow up the soul of a dying man, or spending his last breath in oaths and blasphemies, and his last energies in combating imaginary demons, biting and foaming like an infuriated demon himself, and yelling with fright and horror, and then, with the prescience of inspiration, whisper in his ear, behold here your own miserable end! I doubt not but he would start from me as though stung by an adder. And well he might. Yet I have witnessed just such a death-scene, in one who commenced life with as flattering prospects as any of you; one who for many years went no lower in the scale of vice than to haunt the fashionable hotels and saloons.

But who can remain stationary when this habit has once taken its hold? Its course is downward, and downward; it will drag its victim notwithstanding all his struggles. There is no safe anchorage between moderate drinking and perdition. You may make a nest of vipers your playthings, or warm the envenomed reptiles in your bosom, but "look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, for at last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Survey for a moment the path of the drunkard. Behind him are the scenes of youth and innocence, the only bright spots in his career, gone forever. Before him is the abyss of eternity to which he is urged with an irresistible power. Around him are grim spectres of famine, disease and death, who dog his footsteps and haunt his dreams. Hunger gnaws his vitals, cold pierces his frame, disease palsies his nerves, hope flees his breast, remorse stings his conscience, despair clanks her chains in his ear, madness sears his brain, and

on he flees as though pursued by all the furies of Orestes, until clouds, portentous of Omnipotent wrath and lurid with perdition's fire, gather over his destiny. Our mortal vision can follow him no further, but methinks, that for every drunkard that falls into eternity, a darker wreath rolls up from the bottomless pit. It is the smoke of that torment which ascends forever and forever.



## VII. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

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AND WHEN HE HAD SPENT ALL, THERE AROSE A MIGHTY FAMINE IN THAT LAND; AND HE  
BEGAN TO BE IN WANT.—*Luke xv : 14.*

IN THE succeeding verses we read: "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."

The term here rendered husks, embraces several kinds of coarse food which were used principally for fattening swine, but which were also, in times of scarcity like the one referred to, the common food of the poorer classes of society. The fruit, supposed to be particularly indicated, is that of the carob tree, which is indigenous in Ionia, Syria and Rhodes, and resembles in its characteristics the common bean.

We have come now to a new event in this young man's career. The scene is suddenly shifted, like the changes upon the stage, and he whom we last saw in the whirl of excitement and pleasure, enjoying to-day and careless of to-morrow, we now behold reduced to the lowest extreme of abject wretchedness. The picture is one of life, except that the scenes of life do not always change so suddenly. But the parable is very concise, and only presents us with results, without detailing all the minute circumstances and influences which combined to produce them. The truth probably is, that like all similar cases, he went on from one degree of wickedness to another, plunging deeper into crime and degradation, until all at once he was startled into sobriety by finding himself far away from home, without money and without friends; turned out upon the world by his graceless companions, as an unfeeling master turns out a broken-down

horse upon the common, to pick for himself or to die. This is the way the master, whom he had served always, treats his most faithful servants when they are no longer useful to him. And this is the manner in which his emissaries — those lesser devils incarnate — use their companions in vice. When they have plucked their gosling clean they throw him out, regardless of the cold wind or the pitiless storm, without even a cover for his nakedness.

“When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.” Here was a twofold calamity; his money was gone, and what was worse, his character was gone too. And then there arose one of those terrible famines peculiar to that country. The question with him was, not how he should amuse himself, or what scene of dissipation he should visit; but where he should appease his appetite and allay the gnawings of hunger. Should he go back to his associates, who had robbed him of his patrimony, and who were chuckling over their ill-gotten gains, and beg of them, on the score of old friendship, cemented by many a bottle of sparkling wine at his expense, to restore at least a few dollars to save him from starvation? They would only curse him for his impudence, or taunt him for his simplicity; or perhaps quarrel with him and thrust him into the street, for the bare intimation that there had been anything ungentlemanly in their conduct towards him! So long as he was the dashing young spendthrift, scattering his money with reckless prodigality, they were ready to convulse with laughter at his jokes, even if they were rather stale; they were willing to be made the butt of ridicule themselves if it added to his self-complacency, or even to accept of slight apology for a hasty blow. But now the least insinuation of anything unfair or unkind, is sufficient to offend their dignity, and to arouse their wrath. Here, then, was the last place to look for sympathy.

Should he seek out some honorable and virtuous citizen, and apply for an honest employment suited to his education and capacity? Such a one might inquire, “Are you not the young man who came here from the east, whose associates have been

the lowest and vilest scum of society, who have filled our town with tales of your reckless prodigality, and whose influence has already corrupted the hearts of many of our children? No, I have no employment for such as you! I want honest, industrious, temperate men, and not bloated inebriates; or broken-down profligates, or bankrupt gamblers!"

Should he actually descend to beggary? The parable hints that he did; "but no man gave unto him." Who could regard him as a proper object of charity? Would they not justly suspect him of imposition? Would they not say to themselves, there is no use in giving to him, for he will only abuse our charity and spend it upon his depraved appetite? How naturally, and yet how inevitably, every door seemed to be closed against him; as though there was a combination in society to exclude him from any honest employment, and actually to drive him to a more desperate course!

This is the way that burglars, highwaymen and counterfeiters are made. When a man has reduced himself to such a condition by vice, then he is held by a stern and inevitable law to the course which he has chosen. And society only acts on the defensive, when it fears and shuns such a character. But this young man had one redeeming trait. There was one influence at work in his heart, and now that he was brought to reflection, its saving efficacy began to operate. He could not abandon himself to such a life as now opened to him. The influence of home, and the impressions of childhood saved him, where another would have been utterly ruined.

He resolved to go out into the country where he was not known, and accept the first honest employment that offered: thus, by degrees, to attempt to retrieve his character and position. A man may ruin his character in a day, but it takes years to re-establish it when once lost. A fire will destroy in a single night what it takes years of patient toil to construct.

1. But this parable has a spiritual as well as a literal interpretation, and is intended to apply to every one who is prodigal of the blessings of heaven, who abuses the love of God, and throws away life without attaining any valuable object. There-

fore, in the further consideration of this subject, I shall draw a parallel between the temporal calamities which befel this infatuated youth, and those spiritual calamities which will befall the soul that is prodigal towards God.

I shall refer to his case only as an illustration of what such an individual must do in order to receive the forgiveness of his abused and insulted Father. The specific subjects of which I have spoken, as combining to produce his temporal ruin, have their application to our temporal relations, as we pass on through life. They work out their own results, and present them to the eye; but the consequences of our abuse of spiritual mercies may not appear till the soul experiences them in eternity. The parable illustrates the tendency of all sin, and shows a result that will be attained, sooner or later, by every one who passes away life prodigal of its blessings, and thoughtless of the future. There will be a day of want, of desolation and despair, that will visit the soul, causing deep and unavailing sorrow in view of its own recklessness.

It is a worldly maxim that vice is the parent of misery, and an inspired truth, that "the way of the transgressor is hard." Every virtue, which we are commanded to practice, conduces to health, honor, wealth and happiness, while vice of every description leads directly to disease, dishonor, poverty and misery. Thus we have the evidence before our eyes, that holiness is necessary to perfect happiness; and that all that is required to make hell as dreadful as it is represented by the figures of Scripture, is to let human passion reign unchecked; for it sometimes makes a hell upon earth.

We may deck vice in gay attire. Art and wealth may lend their aid to hide her deformities, and grace her manners, so that at first she may charm with her blandishments and her deceitful smiles; yet it is like dressing up a grinning, ghastly skeleton in the drapery of a bride. When her diabolical end is attained, she will drop her mask, throw off her drapery, and stretch out her long fleshless arms to encircle her victim in the embrace of death.



It is not probable that this young man entertained such views of the nature of his sin while he was in the height of sensual enjoyment; but when he began to be in want; when he could see with unclouded vision its terrible results; when he looked at himself, degraded to a miserable swineherd, and sharing with his charge their coarse but nutritious fare, he began likewise to perceive the deformity of sin in all its grades and developments.

So it may be with many of us, as it respects the relation of the soul to the eternal future. Because we flatter ourselves that all is well, when we are, in fact, far away from our Heavenly Father and the enjoyment of His love, it is no evidence that the day will never come in which the soul will be in want! A time when we may, like him, look back over a life squandered, love abused, mercy slighted, blessings perverted, and, before us, to a degradation deeper than that into which he had fallen—the degradation of an eternal companionship with all the vile outcasts of earth, and with devils. This parable, as already stated, has a spiritual, as well as a literal interpretation, and this is the very point intended to be illustrated in this passage: “When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.” And what is the real difference between the case of this short-sighted young man, who had wasted his substance with “riotous living” without thought of such an emergency as had now occurred, and the individual who spends the whole of life in pleasing himself and who finds upon his death-bed that he has made no preparation for those awful reverses that are coming upon the soul? What have his worldly honors, or worldly riches, or worldly pleasures done in preparing him for the scenes now about to be disclosed to his view, in the destruction of all his airy castles, and the awful famine of a soul without God and hope?

When your minds are filled with wonder, in view of the infatuation of one who wasted his time and patrimony upon the follies and vices of youth, institute for a moment a comparison between these two cases, and see if an impartial judgment will

not decide that they bear no more comparison than time does to eternity.

2. But let us go deeper than to a mere observation of the external circumstances of this individual. If we can look within his mind and see what thoughts are revolving there, and within his heart, and discern what emotions begin to be awakened within his breast, we shall learn many lessons of practical importance as it regards our own spiritual relations.

This we are enabled to do to some extent, from what is disclosed in the succeeding part of the parable. But our view at present is restricted to his condition as he sat disconsolate watching his swinish herd, an employment to a Jew the most menial and disgusting, and not to be coveted even by a Gentile. Can any condition be imagined more helpless and hopeless, more pitiable, more God and man forsaken, than that of the poor, nerveless, dejected outcast who has run his career of vice, blasted every prospect, shut up every door of hope, and who, from dire necessity, is compelled to think on his ways and devise some mode of relief? His mind is shattered, his body enervated, his spirits broken, his resolution and fortitude gone, and then, as though this were not enough to keep him down, he has superadded a load which, of itself, is sufficient to crush him forever, in the strength which his evil habits have acquired.

Poverty and suffering may quell them for a season, but the moment his prospects brighten they will revive with all their original power. His future course must be literally a warfare with the flesh and the devil, and it will be no matter of surprise if they triumph in the end. At all events, nothing but unceasing vigilance on his part, and the assistance of Almighty grace, can keep him from falling. O! if there be an object of pity in the universe, it is the prodigal who has run his race, and who is striving to breast the mighty tide that is sweeping him down to the gulf of infamy. The wonder is, not that so few retrieve their errors, but that any accomplish such a herculean task. And when we observe an effort of this kind, we should hasten, with all the sympathy of love, to strengthen every good purpose.

He needs sympathy and help; for all along his career he has been heaping up obstacles which appear to his disheartened spirit as high as heaven, every one of which must be surmounted, and this, too, under all the disadvantages and disabilities of his condition. Suppose such a one to be a dear friend, struggling with this pressure of circumstances and these entanglements of Satan. Ought you not to pity him, and fly, as on the wings of love, to his relief? He may be a penitent to-day, attempting, with all his wasted strength, to rise. To-morrow he may have given up the contest, and fallen, to rise no more.

Nor do I intend these remarks to be restricted, in their application, to a condition of temporal ruin merely. They apply with equal or even greater force to the spiritual state of a soul convicted of its sinfulness, but unable, of its own strength, to cast off the shackles of spiritual bondage and rise from the degradation of sin to newness of life. The sinner has abused the goodness and mercy of God, until, from a feeling of delinquency, he lacks confidence to ask favor of a Being so deeply injured as his Heavenly Father. And in the despondency of his heart he says that it is vain to hope for forgiveness, where so many mercies have been abused, so many blessings perverted, and so many gifts squandered. He is conscious that he has been all his lifelong wandering from home; that every step he has taken in sin has increased the gulf of separation between him and God. Every act of transgression rises up as a cloud to shut out his soul from the light of heaven, until his fevered imagination beholds the whole spiritual horizon gathering blackness over his head. He sees no light, no hope. How many obstacles have accumulated in his path! What humiliation and self-abasement he must suffer! What temptations are to be overcome! What resolution he must summon before he can retrieve the errors of a whole life! No wonder that he sometimes gives himself up to despair, and sits down to brood over the accumulated miseries of his situation. This is the light in which he views his own case, when he surveys his condition under the goadings of an awakened conscience—a view which arises entirely from his own sense of delinquency, and

which his excited imagination paints in such living colors as to deter him from taking the only course that he can adopt with safety.

The prodigal at first gave himself up as lost. He did not think of adopting the course which resulted so happily until he had tried every other expedient, and only when driven to the last extremity did he form the resolution to go home and humble himself before his father. If we were to examine his course with reference to its spiritual application, we should say he had no business out in that field, living among the swine, when he knew that he had a kind and indulgent father, who only needed to see his destitution to relieve it; to know of his penitence to forgive. He ought to have possessed confidence enough in his father's humanity to have at least ventured upon his mercy. But it was humiliating to go back in such a plight; that was the great obstacle. And so the prodigal, away from God, has no business to sit down in despair, when he knows how forgiving his Heavenly Father is. Let him say that he is tired of sin—that his soul is in want—famishing in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, and that he is resolved to go home to his abused father and crave his mercy; and how many sympathizing hearts will fly to his rescue? How many will extend the fraternal hand and bid him God speed? How many will intercede with heaven to pity and forgive the penitent? God himself will bend a listening ear from his throne of mercy to catch the first broken accents of contrition. It is an incense that is fragrant in heaven, because it is the incense of the heart.

3. But I am getting in advance of my subject. I must return to the condition in which the text describes the prodigal, for he had not yet formed the resolution of which I am speaking. He was "in want." Here was a proper situation for reflection. The excitement for dissipation had passed off, and with it all the delusions and deceptions which had cheated his soul and lured him on to ruin. He was alone. Solitude in such a case is dreadful, still it is salutary. The mind can then turn upon itself, and look deep enough into its own disorder to understand the worst of the case. What remorse such a retro-



spect of life must have awakened in his breast? He could call to mind the happy days of innocence and youth, his father's counsel, his mother's parting tears, and think of the misery which the tale of his ruin would inflict, should a rumor of it reach their ears. He could picture, in imagination, those loved ones at home, when they assembled after the toils of the day, as families are wont, to talk of the absent son. To wonder if he were alive, or whether he were successful and happy, and to look forward to a future day with delightful anticipations, when he should return, perhaps laden with riches, to delight their ears with narratives of the strange scenes and events that he had encountered in his journey. Alas, what a picture would he present to a parent's eye. No wonder that he should shudder at the idea of inflicting such a blow. His father had done all that he could to give him a respectable outfit. He had even divided his living; which, instead of using to advantage, he had spent upon his unhallowed lusts. How many similar cases there are in the world? And is there any remorse like that of such a conscience? Or any grief like that which a parent endures when he learns that the object of love, of hope, of pride, whom he had expected to win a name of honor, has covered himself with infamy?

I knew a young man who committed a crime which sentenced him to the gallows, and which fate was only averted by suicide. And when his father, a most worthy and respectable man, heard of his wicked deed he fell stunned to the earth. The cruel blow paralyzed every faculty, though he lived for years after, it was as a driveling idiot. He was at least saved from a knowledge of the final catastrophe. It is an awful thing for a man to ruin himself temporarily; but what comparison does it bear to a soul ruined eternally? Think of this ye who are sensible of his wickedness, but who perhaps are committing a more fatal error yourselves. Will not the follies of life recur to the mind and overwhelm the soul with desolating power in eternity? Will not a quickened imagination paint the very walls of the prison with the scenes of an infatuated career, standing out in

bold relief; and fill the very atmosphere with voices whispering the awful truth, "Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself."

O, these Sabbath bells, these venerable old family Bibles, these songs of Zion, these pious instructions, yea, all these abused mercies of God! This richer patrimony to the soul than any earthly possession, will be remembered when they are gone forever. Memory and conscience will live so long as immortality endures. Nothing but the utter annihilation of the soul can avert these consequences.

4. But there is another feature in the case of this young man that has been only referred to incidentally. It is the view which he must have obtained of the deceitfulness of earthly pleasure and the disgusting nature of sin generally. He once had many friends; nothing could exceed their devotion or the ardor of their professions. They were ready to drink with him, to win money from him, or fight for him whenever it suited his convenience. His friends were their friends; his enemies the objects of their particular hatred. Where were they now? Like all friendships formed from interest and cemented by vice, they were dissipated at the first blast of adversity. These are not the friends for such an emergency as he was encountering, and he doubtless looked with loathing and hatred upon his former associates, and with contempt upon himself for having been their dupe.

Then again, there was the ball-room, the place where he had lavished his money with characteristic profusion; where he had occupied a prominent place among the gay throng of revelers; where beauty had smiled upon him, and cringing servility had done him homage. Could the ball-room do nothing for him now? Look at him away in that desolate field, sitting among the pigs, hatless, shoeless, shivering and companionless. Does he look like one that had figured in the ball-room? Let him go there now and what would be his welcome? The ladies would scream and apply to their smelling-bottles, and whiskered waiters would be summoned to thrust the disgusting creature out of the room. Yet he is a better man now than he was when they flattered and fawned upon him, because he is at least a

sober man. He is a wiser man, too, because he has learned a practical lesson that he will not easily forget. He will never be guilty again of making such characters his companions, or such pleasures the object of pursuit.

O, how must he now loathe and hate everything connected with his former life! These vices and pleasures have done their unhallowed task, they have completed his ruin, and now they afford him nothing to fall back upon in the hour of distress, no, not even a theme of contemplation, without at the same time awakening feelings of remorse and shame. Such is the true nature of all earthly joys, and the prodigal could now estimate their worth. He could look at himself and see a practical demonstration of what sin does, the want and desolation which it entails and its utter insufficiency to afford aid and consolation when they are most needed.

And now, in bringing my subject to a conclusion, let me present the analogy between his case and that of the individual who has looked no further than this world, either for happiness, or for resources when the soul is done with the scenes of life. This young man did not know that a famine was coming, yet, he might have known that the course of life which he was leading would end in destitution. But we do know that a time is not distant when all the objects of sense that now engross our time will be valueless; when the idols of our heart will forsake us; when we shall lack both the energy and the opportunity to retrieve our error, if we have committed one. Are there not even now premonitions of such an event? Does not the soul aspire after something higher and holier and more enduring, more congenial to its own nature, than the things of time? What means this panting, and grasping, and sighing after something above and beyond what it has yet experienced, if it be not an evidence that the soul is already in want? What if you were possessor of all the wealth that ever delighted your imagination, you would be no nearer happiness than you are now. Or if you were to enjoy all the honors of a world at vassalage, and kings were to lie in humble submission at your feet, like the monarch of the world, you would sigh that there was not

another world to conquer. This is because there are spiritual wants originating in your spiritual nature, which, if not satisfied, will leave the soul amid all the delights of sense, as in a "dry and thirsty land where no water is." Let me suppose one of you to have attained all the desires of your heart, in respect to this life; but, like the prodigal, have neglected to think of a day of want. Riches have procured for you every luxury which wealth can purchase. Sympathizing friends watch around your dying bed to anticipate every want. These have done much in securing to you respectability, influence and happiness, and will do much in smoothing the dying pillow, and alleviating physical suffering. They will minister to your wants through the last stages of life's journey. All this I admit. But when you come to the journey's end, what can they be then? How will your case differ from that of the prodigal when he was left without resource? You look back over your life, only at a hand's breadth, a vapor, or, like a meteor flashing for a moment across the heavens, and then buried in darkness. Yet it has consisted of many long years, now wasted and gone forever—eternity is before you. There is the maturity of the soul and there lies the scene of its exalted hopes, and the theatre of its mighty developments; but this is a change for which no preparation has been made. O, will there not arise a mighty famine in the soul then? A famine more raging and intense than all the suffering which the poor diseased dying body can endure? When such a moment as this approaches, and the curtain begins to fall over the scenes of time, and the eternal world opens before the eye, quickened into spiritual discernments, and all these considerations of infinite magnitude one after another begin to rise and swell, and glow, until they occupy every thought, what has earth to do with the soul then? It has faded like a phantom of the mist, and in an instant is gone forever.

The folly of the prodigal consisted in wasting a few months, or at least a few years in pleasure, disregarding the future; of squandering his fortune without securing anything valuable. And when you view him forsaken, destitute and miserable,



you say at once, here is a just retribution. And he felt that it was just, now that he saw things in their true light. But what shall be our decision in regard to one who has spent the whole of life, without regard to the future life? who has squandered not an earthly patrimony, but the far richer patrimony of grace which God has conferred upon the soul. God has not bestowed all these blessings upon us without, at the same time, creating a responsibility for the manner in which we improve them. Christ did not suffer humiliation and death that we should perish miserably and without hope, as though there were no way of salvation provided, but that the terrible sting of death may be removed by the presence of faith and hope. God has not given us the Sabbath, with all its hallowed associations and delightful privileges, that it should be spent like other days, in toil and pleasure; but that we may cultivate our minds and hearts in the study of religious truth, and the worship of the sanctuary. He did not furnish us with the Book of Life, that it might prove a savor of death by obscuring the path to heaven; but that it might be a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path; a chart on the troubled ocean; a lighthouse upon the sunken rock, sending its beams far over the expanse of waters, and guiding to a port of safety.

This is the patrimony that we have received from our Heavenly Father; and the question is, how it has been improved? If any of us are ever so unhappy as to sit down in the realms of despair, wretched and forsaken of God and hope, how this inheritance of grace will dwell in the memory, and these green spots in the desert of our pilgrimage will haunt the imagination? The misery of the prodigal was as nothing compared with such a retrospect of life as this, for he might yet retrieve his error, and go home to his father; but the soul that has squandered away life is shut out from God, and hope, and heaven. O is there not such a famine coming upon the souls of some who hear me?

I cannot read the future, and if the book of fate lay before me, and I had permission to open and read, I would not dare unclasp its lids. But I can discern enough in the present to

foresee what the future must be. I see it in your abuses of God's great mercy; in your thoughtlessness of death; in the insensibility of the soul to spiritual things; in the infatuation which seems to possess the heart; in banishing thoughts of the future, by the excitement of the passing moment. Living like the gilded butterfly which flutters across our path in the morning and lies dead at our feet at night. All this is evidence, to my mind, that a time will come when, in the language of inspiration, the soul will moan in piteous accents, O, that I had been wise, that I had understood this, "that I had considered my latter end."

But this bitter hour has not yet come. Now your case is like that of the prodigal. You may go home to your Heavenly Father, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." If you will do this, and follow him step by step, as I shall hereafter describe his course, there will be joy in heaven over another repentant sinner.

## VIII. THE RESOLUTION.

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AND WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, HE SAID, HOW MANY HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER'S HAVE BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE, AND I PERISH WITH HUNGER! I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER.—*Luke xv: 17, pt. of 18.*

THERE is great force in the simple expression, “when he came to himself.” It implies that he had been living under a delusion or hallucination. That he had not acted under the influence of any of those motives which should govern a rational being. He had exercised neither wisdom nor forethought, but had lived in a state of continued excitement, governed only by momentary impulses. His conduct in seeking and obtaining a most menial employment was, perhaps, in the state to which he had reduced himself, the best that he could have adopted as a temporary expedient; for we may readily suppose him incapable of forming any fixed resolution, or of devising any extensive plans for the future.

What he most needed was an opportunity for reflection, and time for his mind to rally its exhausted powers. But his was not a course of life that could accomplish for him what was necessary. It could never restore him to his lost position. And now that he was secured from the immediate danger of starvation, he began to cast about himself, and to devise something more effectual. His condition was one of conviction. He saw his former life in its true colors; he felt the bitterness of sin. He had just views of his own case and of his father's character. The scales had fallen from his eyes. The intoxication had left his brain, and he longed to go home. His situation was much like that of the poor deluded lunatic who, in possession of the idea that he is a prince or a hero, has decked himself with tinsel and feathers, were he to be restored suddenly to his right

mind, and to have a rational view of himself in all his finery and filth as he had appeared to others. This coming to one's self is a necessary pre-requisite to any important or efficient step when an individual has been acting under delusion.

If a man has been infatuated with any vice which is leading him down to ruin, he must come to himself; he must see its character and tendency in its true light, and his own position in relation to it, before he will summon a sufficient momentum of resolution to surmount the obstacles in the way of his restoration. Or, if an individual has placed himself in the same condition in his relation to his Heavenly Father that this man had in relation to his earthly parent, he must perceive the nature and tendency of sin, his own guilt in practising it, and the holiness and justice of God's character as they truly are, before he will resolve to break loose from its trammels.

The prodigal, then, was, at this stage, a convicted sinner, but not a converted one. That work was only complete when he was locked in his father's embrace, and heard the command, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: for this, my son, was dead and is alive again; was lost, and is found." He was at home then, restored as completely to his place and to the affection of his parent as though he had never sinned.

But the resolution, which was the turning point in his destiny, was not so easily formed as we may imagine from a simple perusal of the parable. There is a struggle, a conflict of passions and emotions which always precedes a step of such importance. Many a prodigal has been reduced to a state of beggary, who never formed the resolution to go home. Many a man, given up to the dominion of some particular vice, has seen its nature as clearly as the prodigal did, who has not broken it off, and, as a consequence, has gone to a premature grave. And many a convicted sinner has had all these great truths presented to his mind until his brain has almost reeled with the intensity of the excitement, who has died in sin.



I feel, therefore, that I should not be doing justice to my subject, were I not to enter into a more minute analysis of the operations of his mind, before he had brought it to the fixed and determined purpose "to arise." There were many obstacles existing in the mind itself that would naturally operate with great force in deterring it from making this important resolution. They were just such difficulties as often do prevent men, in analogous circumstances, from retrieving their errors. Their influence is to suspend the mind in a vacillating, hesitating, undecided state, until the favorable moment for acting is passed.

1. There was a great distance between him and his father's house. For we read that when he had received his money he took his journey into a far country. His object was, as I stated when speaking upon that subject, to get away from his father's observation and the restraining influences of home. The whole parable shows that his father was a man of rank and property; therefore his son did not wander off as a vagrant, on foot and unprepared for his journey. He was probably furnished sumptuously, and mounted upon a horse or a mule, with every provision made for his comfort. Thus he might have found it very pleasant to ride an easy day's journey and be well entertained at night. There was in this that continued change and novelty which is so gratifying to a youth of roaming propensities. How different the case would be on his return. This whole distance, once traveled so pleasantly, must be retraced on foot, over burning sands and sharp stones that would blister and lacerate his tender feet. It was easy enough to get away; but it is hard to get back! The way to hell is broad and smooth; but the way to heaven is beset with many difficulties. All these objections would arise in his mind, and he saw that it was to be a work of life and death, and not one requiring an ordinary effort of the will. Was he sure he had strength enough to accomplish the task, or would he perish by the way? We shall see.

2. But there was another obstacle more formidable than this. What humiliation and self-abasement it would require? He could bear to humble himself before his father, for him had he injured; but there were others to behold his disgrace who had

not a father's sympathy. He could imagine how those young companions, who had regarded him with envy when they beheld him leave in the possession of his fortune, would point at him the finger of scorn, and the laugh of derision would echo through the streets. Nor would these sentiments be confined to one class; for while the young would jeer and taunt, the old would shake their wise heads in solemn gravity, and tell how they would have acted had a son of theirs abused their confidence in such a manner. Thus his case would be the subject of comment and animadversion to the whole neighborhood. True, his friends and his father's friends would hasten to bid him welcome, and to rejoice in his restoration, but the evil-minded and the malignant would make him the subject of ridicule and biting sarcasm; just as the ungodly always do when they see one of their companions humbling himself before God. Nor is this an obstacle of a trifling nature to a penitent. Thousands perish in sin rather than surmount it, merely because their fear of man is greater than their fear of God. It is probably one that was duly weighed and measured, and well considered by the prodigal; for he had come to himself, was acting rationally; and was taking his measures with that deliberate forethought which ensured success.

3. Then, again, there were natural misgivings, as to whether his father would receive him in such a miserable and destitute condition. He knew his character, and perhaps had often seen him minister to the wants of the destitute, and had heard their thanksgiving as they left his door, fed and clothed. From all this he had ground to hope for a favorable issue. But his was a peculiar case. They had never received such blessings, nor abused them as he had done. Would not his conduct put even the love of a father to a severe test? What if he should refuse to see him, and send his servants to drive him from his door? If there were ground of hope in the character of his father, there was also ground for fearful misgiving from his own character. Thus his mind might alternate between hope and fear, according to the different views which he took of the subject. These feelings are not singular, or peculiar; they are the most

natural; and, because the most natural, the very opposite of what they should be. They are just what every sinner experiences before he ventures fully upon the mercy of God.

But something was necessary to be done, and that immediately, for his case was growing more desperate continually. His clothing was poor enough now, but his present employment would furnish him with no better; and soon cold winds and pelting storms would come, and he would perish. Delay was not only dangerous, but it was death. The distance was great, as I have already remarked, and he was poorly provided; yet he could but perish if he made the attempt. What if his squalid appearance did involve humiliation; others might be warned by his example and saved. They had seen his folly, and he resolved they should now see his penitence. What need he care for the derision of the evil-minded? Their opinions were of no consequence to him now; for it was restoration to his father's confidence and love, and to the good will of the virtuous, that he desired. It was home, happiness, forgiveness that his heart yearned for. Whether his father would forgive him or not, he could only know when he stood in his presence, as a penitent, to crave his forgiveness. But if he waited until he could go clad in silks and velvet, he would stay away forever. Therefore he wisely resolved that he would attempt no such folly, but would go just as he was, in all his destitution and nakedness. He knew if his father received him he could easily supply all these wants; and if he did not receive him he would have no need of clothing, for he would soon die. Probably he judged correctly, that his pitiable condition would excite his father's sympathy; and he resolved to make his woful plight his plea, and to say, "I am poor, and miserable and destitute of all things."

Now, I appeal to your candid judgment to know if this was not the wisest, in fact the only practicable course? Was it not the very best plea that he could make, all things considered? So the Bible says, and so say we, that it is the best plea the sinner can make when he goes to God for pardon. He need not go about to establish a righteousness for himself, or to improve

his condition in any way, before he returns to his Heavenly Father, because, if God receives him, he has a robe already prepared that he will put upon him. It is the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, which will qualify him to grace the circles of the heavenly court; a robe whose purity and fitness will never be questioned by angel or saint.

Whenever our Heavenly Father sees a poor, weary, heavy laden sinner, coming just as he is, with all his sin and infirmities, it moves his heart with pity, because he here beholds not only evidence of misery, but of genuine repentance. This is the class to whom he addresses the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is both an offense and an insult to come in any other way, because it is setting aside the provisions of the gospel, by which mercy is offered to the guilty, and not to the righteous. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!" And it will ever be the theme of enraptured song to the redeemed soul that it has been saved, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." This is one of the simplest, and, at the same time, one of the most important truths revealed in the Word of God. And not only this, but it is one that commends itself to the understanding of every one. Suppose, for illustration, that this young man, for the purpose of imposing upon his father, had actually procured, in some way, a splendid robe of purple and gold, in which he had enveloped himself in such a manner as to conceal all his rags, and he had come into his presence boasting of his success, telling him he had farms and merchandise, and rich garments, but required a little more ready money just to relieve a temporary embarrassment, and he had come to see what arrangement he could make with him for a sum sufficient for his present purpose. The father looks upon him with some degree of suspicion; his story is too large to be credible, considering the time he has been gone; beside there are some things in his appearance that do not comport with the splendor of his robe. A corner is raised by a passing gust of wind, and



he thinks that he discovers the naked skin beneath. To satisfy himself he takes hold of the beautiful garment, as if to examine it more closely, and with a single jerk tears it from his shoulders; and there he stands dirty and ragged, worse, almost naked, an object of contempt rather than of pity! Would not indignation and scorn, for the base imposition, be the most natural feelings of the father under these circumstances?

But this represents exactly what the prodigal toward God is attempting, when he strives by works of self-righteousness to make himself better, before he casts himself upon his sovereign mercy. The Omniscient eye penetrates the thin web of expedients and sees a heart covered with sin as with a moral leprosy, which the individual is attempting to conceal, instead of revealing the malady to the Great Physician.

The best plea before God is the helplessness and hopelessness of our case. The whole tenor and spirit of God's word is,

"Come, ye sinners! heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall,  
If you wait till you are better,  
You will never come at all;  
Sinners, only,  
Christ *the Saviour* came to call.  
Let not sense of guilt prevent you  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness he requireth,  
Is to feel your need of him;  
This he gives you,  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

So thought the prodigal, and so he acted, when he said, "I will arise and go to my father."

This was the turning point in his destiny; the determination of his will, an act of the mind that governs all subsequent acts. His course after this was only carrying into execution the resolution here formed, and the happy results attained were but the consummation of a work that had its commencement here.

This is a point of too much importance to pass over hastily, for it is one that decides the character and fate of the soul. Life and death, heaven and hell, are all pending upon this simple act

of the mind. An individual may desire religion, he may even mourn over his condition and prospects to the day of his death, but he will never take one heavenward step until the purpose is formed, inflexibly, to seek it with the whole heart. This is a necessary starting point, but even this of itself is not sufficient. The prodigal did not rest in the bare resolution, but when it was formed he arose immediately to put it into execution.

Now, I doubt not but many who hear me have often resolved to become Christians, or, in other words, at some future time to seek the pardoning love of God. I cannot believe there are any who have dared to form deliberately a resolution that they will never become different in their character from what they are at present; living without recognizing in any way the claims of God upon them, and dying without hope. Yet while they have resolved to become Christians, they have continued sinners, wandering further and further from home. Suppose that the prodigal had resolved to go to his father at some future time, and then joined himself again to his evil companions and resumed his former career with new zeal. Or, suppose that after he had formed this resolution he had continued where he was, waiting for some one to come and carry him, or even to know that every obstacle was removed so that he should encounter no difficulties by the way, what would have been the end of his career? Every one must perceive that he would have died as he was, an alien and an outcast.

But this is the way the Kingdom of Heaven is sought by scores. The mind rests satisfied with the good resolution, waiting for more favorable circumstances, till suddenly grim death stands in their path and announces to the terrified soul that the work of life is done, and that it must now appear before God, not as a voluntary penitent to seek his pardon, but, involuntarily to hear its doom. O, that I could impress this one great truth upon your minds, that whatever you purpose to do in this matter, now is the time! Delay will not remove a single obstacle, but on the other hand these are accumulating continually; beside the immense risk you incur in presuming upon an uncertain future. You may think that God will hold back the wheels

of time; or that death will pause and suspend his blow while you deliberate upon the matter; but time will roll on and death level his dart irrespective of your condition or wants.

Or, again, you may falter and hesitate in taking this important step, because you fear that you shall not have strength and perseverance to carry out your purpose. But is this a rational objection? Had the prodigal any assurance that he should ever surmount all the difficulties in his way? On the contrary, were not the probabilities against him? Yet he resolved that if he perished it should be with his face towards home, and as near his father's door as possible. You have no assurance that you will live to eat the fruit of the tree which you plant, or to enjoy the beauty and fragrance of the flowers you sow, or that you will even occupy the house that you build. In short, you have no assurance of anything in this world, except that you will soon leave it forever. Yet this does not deter you from acting for the future. If the same objection were allowed to prevail in relation to secular matters, the wheels of progress would stop, and the human family would die out from starvation. But the parallel is not perfect; for while God has given you no assurance in relation to these secular matters, he has, in the other case, given you all the assurance that the circumstances will admit. You have the oath of one who cannot lie, that he has no pleasure in your destruction. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

If this be God's disposition, the moment you place yourself in the condition here specified, by turning from your ways, you have the oath and promise of One who will uproot the foundation of heaven and earth sooner than His word shall fail. Can you form the resolution in your soul, that you, like the prodigal, will arise? Not when these lectures are through, or when a more convenient season occurs, or when you are older, or are admonished by disease; but NOW. You need not look forward to ultimate results; for if you have grace to take this first step, grace will be given for each succeeding step, until you arrive at your journey's end. Will you form this resolution, then? For

this is the only question with which you have any concern at present. It is a simple one. Yet it is a point upon which your soul balances as on a pivot between heaven and hell. And if you resist this appeal, with all the light and conviction now resting upon your mind, you need never wonder why you are not a Christian, but you may wonder that you live in the enjoyment of a day and the means of grace.

4. The next point is, the manner in which he accomplished his journey. The parable does not specify, therefore we are left to form our own opinion. I can only suggest what appears to me to be the most probable course. We do not read that his father had any knowledge of his conduct, or even of his locality, after he left the parental roof. Yet we are not to suppose that he was entirely indifferent to his fate; and though facilities for intercommunication were few, he could easily have devised some means by which he might become acquainted with his way of life. During all that long period of reckless abandonment, while the son thought himself unnoticed and uncared for, the eye of the father, in one sense, was upon him.

The ties that exist between a parent and a child are not easily sundered; and though the parent may for wise reasons conceal his feelings, and even desire to have the child consider that he has ceased to regard his conduct with solicitude, yet he will watch, and grieve, and pray, that he may see or hear something that shall indicate a favorable change. Suppose this man to have been rich and noble, and the history does not contravene the opinion, but rather favors it, how easy it would have been for him to have sent a secret agent, to watch the course of his son, and to report to him. Or, he might have had friends, to whom he could have written, requesting that they should counsel and aid him when he desired to return. Thus those who refused him aid and comfort while he was pursuing his vicious course, might be the first to fly to his assistance when they heard his true position; and they might have helped him on a stage in his journey, and given him letters to others of a like character.

So the eye of God is upon every wandering prodigal. He represents himself as possessing all the feelings of a parent in



this respect. He says, "If I am a parent, where is my honor?" "Behold, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" All these are expressions of tender solicitude on the part of our Heavenly Father toward his wayward children. He does not give them up the moment they rebel, but He waits with infinite patience and forbearance for their return. Neither does He go to the opposite extreme, and interpose His omnipotence to restrain them from wandering, and force them to obedience. He does just as this parent did with his disobedient child; permits them to eat of the fruit of their own ways and to be satisfied with their own devices. He will send no angel to rescue them from the ruin to which they are hastening. If they come to Him for pardon it must be voluntary, because the virtue of the act lies in the fact that it is of a voluntary character.

But while he does this as a necessary part of his moral government, He has instituted means for their recovery whenever they shall "come to themselves" and desire to be forgiven. And as a most important part of this arrangement He has directed his friends to seek out the prodigal in his unhappy and helpless condition and to help him onward in his heavenward journey. What course then should the penitent pursue, when his heart yearns for restoration and home? Obviously he should go to the friends of God, and tell them of his troubles and his determination. He needs that kind of sympathy and direction which they alone can give. Let him adopt this course and see if he will not feel the warm pressure of the hand, indicative of a heart full of sympathy and love. Perhaps you know of some brother in the church, whose soul seems to be so completely absorbed by the world that you have very little confidence in his piety. You believe that he cares more for a few dollars than he does for your soul, or even his own. Go to him and tell him that you are tired of the misery and degrada-

tion of sin, and want to find your way to God. See if he will not drop everything else, that he may take you at least one stage on your journey? Perhaps you will find a development of character you did not expect, and learn to your surprise that the man has really a warm Christian heart in his breast, though sadly covered up by worldly rubbish.

Are there not friends of your injured father on my right hand and on my left, that would abandon everything to engage in a work like this? Yet they appear to you, and to me, and to themselves, to be very cold and indifferent. But if they are the friends of God, the love is there. It only needs an object of sympathy to quicken it into life. If you wish sympathy and prayers and direction in a heavenward journey, there are scores who stand ready to take you by the hand and say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." And if there be one cold-hearted backsliden disciple who cannot give an affirmative response, he needs to take the penitent's place himself, and go again to the cross of Christ and look and wonder at the mighty sacrifice which was there made for a race of rebels. He needs to sit there and view the scene until emotions of sympathy, and love, and penitence begin to fill his soul.

Perhaps in my rambling manner, for I could devise no better plan for presenting this subject, I have glanced at all the points of analogy that need be considered. You have seen one obstacle after another removed from the path of the wanderer, and his own mind brought to the determination to go home. Now, for a moment, contemplate the poor outcast, arousing all his remaining energies for the desperate effort. He gathers up his tattered garments and draws them around his emaciated body. He halts and shudders as he looks along the dreary expanse of the desert now open to his view, and stretching away to the horizon like a sea without a shore. Not a shrub or green spot appears to cheer the eye or to relieve the monotony of the scene. The rays of the meridian sun beat upon his head, and the scorching sand blisters his feet, "each step extorts a groan, telling of bodily suffering; or a sigh, expressive of the deeper anguish of his heart. O, what determination of will and forti-

tude of spirit it requires to travel the path of the penitent!" No wonder his heart sinks within him at the prospect. But his resolution is unshaken. He has embarked in an enterprise of life and death, and, if he falls, he determines to fall in the homeward path. This is the first stage of his journey; turn your eyes to another scene.

The desert has been traveled, and exercise has given new strength to his limbs. He has met on the way those who have whispered words of encouragement and hope in his ears. And now, as he presses forward, he sees a long blue line in the horizon, that gradually rises and looms up before his vision. O, 'tis a sight of gladness to his eye! There are his native hills. There, upon that sunny declivity, he watched his father's flocks when a boy, and higher up the mountain side he pursued the wild goat in his perilous course. Upon the summit of that swelling mound stands his father's house, where are clustered all his hopes. Visions of home now dance before his eyes, and cheer his heart. As he approaches his native mountains, he feels the invigorating atmosphere renovating his system, and infusing the strength and buoyancy of youth into his limbs.

Soon the shades of evening begin to fall on his path; but over that hallowed spot there gleams a lone bright star, and with his eye fixed upon this as a friendly beacon he disregards the darkness and perils of the night. The star sinks down and disappears behind the hill, and then comes, as from the very bosom of the mountain, a faint twinkling light, not so clear and brilliant as the other; but O, what emotions does it awaken in his breast, for it comes from the windows of his father's dwelling! Now he sees, in imagination, the little group assembled around the hearth-stone; perhaps they are talking of him. What though the night be dark, and threatening clouds begin to roll along the sky, and ominous peals of thunder to reverberate among the hills; he heeds them not, for all is light and peace within his soul, and in the morning he will be at home. He will see those dear faces once more, and enjoy the blissful emotion of confessing his faults and of being forgiven. There is no faltering or fainting now. Every step grows firmer because it places him nearer home.

The morning dawns, and the sun sheds his golden beams over the hill side; there in the distance he discerns the old familiar dwelling, now fully revealed to his view. This, at least, remains unchanged. The shepherds are seen winding their way up the mountain, followed by their bleating flocks and lowing herds. But in the door of that dwelling there is one object that fixes his gaze and absorbs all his thoughts. There stands a venerable form, slightly bent by the weight of years, his thin locks waving in the summer breeze, looking serenely and gratefully upon the beautiful landscape spread out before him. One glance, even, at the distance, assures him that his father lives, unchanged in appearance, and unchanged in affection. He may venture to appear before him.

My hearers, were you ever away from home for long, long months, or longer years? You will then remember how the moment your face was set homeward, the imagination would outstrip the flying cars, and your heart would reach there quicker than the telegraphic lightning. You see every familiar face, and even inanimate objects present themselves for a share of your thoughts and affections, because they are associated with the idea of home. You well remember, too, how your impatience increased as the distance diminished, and every moment of delay was the occasion of vexation and complaints. Such is the delight of going home.

Now, in the application of this scene, let me ask you if you have experienced the purer and holier emotions of going home, as a penitent, to your Heavenly Father. The difficulties which I have depicted are, as you perceive, after all, only creatures of imagination; such as the poor, distrustful, irresolute wanderer conjures up of himself; and not such as God interposes in his path. They are soon surmounted by a resolute spirit. The path of the penitent is not so painful and difficult as you imagine it to be; and the tears of penitence are not like the hot, scalding tears of remorse. It is a sweet and blissful sorrow, to sit at the foot of the cross and weep for our sins. And it is an emotion of heaven to feel assurance that atoning blood has so purified our hearts from defilement that God is our reconciled father and heaven is our home.



You roam through the world, as the prodigal did, pleasing yourself with life's passing show, without a home for your soul. But the time is coming when it will need one; just such a home as God proffers to you! These ties that now bind your heart so firmly to your earthly home will all be broken. These cherished objects of your love will all leave you, and your home will become desolate; robbed of all its attractions. The very house you inhabit will be occupied by another or will fall to ruins. In a few years, where will be this most hallowed place on earth? Yet, you have no other home in prospect. It is a melancholy pleasure to visit the home of one's childhood. Where, once, father and mother, and brothers and sisters, all dwelt together in love, and to see it desolate and ruined by neglect; or to find it the abode of strangers; and then to turn your feet into the old graveyard, where generation after generation of parents, and children, are buried and forgotten, there to behold the group that once made home delightful, almost entire, lying, side by side, waiting for the resurrection day; when there will be a reunion of those once loved bodies as well as of the spirits which inhabited them.

Have you the prospect of such a home? A home for your soul, when this tabernacle of clay shall be taken down, and laid again in the bosom of the earth? If not, O! how cheerless the prospect! How terrible the thought of death! With this sustaining hope the spirit may bear with fortitude the assaults of disease. It may wrestle with the agony of dissolution, and rise, calm and serene, above the clouds that darken the valley of death; for there is light within the soul. The night may wax darker, and the storm grow fiercer, and the struggle more painfully intense, but it will be of short duration; and, when the morning comes, it will be at home; home in the bosom of God; home in the society of those it loved on earth; home among the angels and redeemed spirits of the just. All this, and infinitely more than tongue can tell, is pending upon the simple question that I have proposed to you to-night.

## IX. THE PLEA.

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FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN, AND BEFORE THEE, AND AM NO MORE WORTHY TO BE CALLED THY SON: MAKE ME AS ONE OF THY HIRED SERVANTS. —*Luke xv : 18, 19.*

IT MAY be thought by some that I am putting a forced construction on many incidents connected with this parable, and dealing more with a work of imagination than with sober realities. But, if I understand the design of this beautiful allegory, it is to show the emotions and conduct of a true penitent, and to illustrate the character and disposition of our Heavenly Father towards those who seek his forgiveness.

The Bible develops great ideas; but does not consume time, by entering into all those details which are merely gratifying to the curiosity, or pleasing to the imagination. Here we have a sketch containing the outlines and the prominent features of a sublime picture; but the filling up, the clothing with skin and muscles, and coloring with light and shade, so as to give it the appearance of life, is left to the imagination of the reader. Were we only concerned with the narrative, or the fact that he had wandered away from home, fell into evil company, and became miserable, and with its counterpart, that upon sober reflection he resolved to abandon his evil ways and go home, and that he was kindly received by his father, we have all this in the parable. But if we wish to get at the important doctrine here disclosed, and at the spiritual instruction which it is intended to convey, it is evident that we must enter into an analysis of his feelings and the operations of his mind. This is what I have attempted. When I have viewed him as a penitent, I have understood from the term what kind of emotions are embraced in this idea. And when I have spoken of the difficulties in the way of his making a humble confession of sin, with a firm purpose of soul to aban-

don it, I have depicted his case just as all who have been in similar circumstances have described theirs, and as my own experience confirms.

In my last lecture I traced his course homeward, until he came within sight of his father's house; and were I intent only upon presenting a pleasant picture to the view, the proper course would be to commence at that point, and describe the scene that followed. But in order to carry out my design I must go back to the point where he formed his resolution, for it was then that he also decided upon the plea that he would offer. These two acts of the mind stand in juxtaposition in the narrative as they probably did in their inception, but not in their execution. The resolution to go home was acted upon immediately; but the plea could not have been offered until after the journey was performed. Hence, in analyzing the state of his mind, and examining the nature of his plea, it is necessary to separate one from the other, as the subjects themselves are distinct.

It was natural for him to suppose that his father would expect some account of his past life and wasted substance; for this was a duty that he owed his parent, which must be rendered before any real confidence could be re-established between them. He had abandoned the idea of claiming anything on account of a relationship which he had once repudiated; but while he sought the privileges and protection of a servant, he must account to his father as a son. What, therefore, should be the plea? There were three, either of which he might have adopted, had his repentance been insincere, or assumed merely for the sake of receiving the benefit of forgiveness.

1. One was justification. He might have claimed that he had done right; or at all events the best he had power to do. But as he was a convicted man and a true penitent, his conscience forbade such a plea. He knew that if he appealed to his father's sense of justice, and he were to be tried by the inflexible rule of law, there could be no hope.

2. Another plea was extenuation. But this would of course challenge investigation; beside whatever extenuating circum-

stances there might be, they could only mitigate the severity of his punishment and not secure pardon or restoration. This is the effect of extenuation in all cases. It does not justify and restore, but mitigates the severity of our judgment.

3. A third course, and the one he adopted, was a frank and free confession, with an appeal to mercy. The spirit of his confession was: "You see my deep degradation, and that all you might suppose in such a case, as the cause, is true. I am guilty of all the sins that you can imagine, and have no excuse to offer, for they were committed against your advice and remonstrance. I perceive now that you were right and that I was wicked and disobedient. My own heart condemns me, and I knew that you must condemn me also. But for the sake of the love you bore me when I was an innocent child; for the sake of the deplorable condition to which I have reduced myself, pity and forgive, and let my present sufferings and remorse be my sufficient punishment!" Was not this the wisest course as well as the one most likely to touch the sympathies of a parent's heart?

I wish now to leave the prodigal for a season, while we turn aside from the direct course of the narrative to notice some of the different pleas, by which sinners insult the majesty of God and ruin themselves. His plea was the result of a truly penitent spirit; therefore the only one his mind could entertain for a moment. Had he been influenced by merely selfish motives, he would probably have fallen into the fatal error of attempting some mode of self-justification, and thus ruined his own cause as thousands do when they attempt to impose upon God.

I. We are to understand, then, that he did not plead a sinful nature as justification. This is an argument often found in the mouths of the wicked. When expressed in its true language it is, that God has created them with a disposition to sin. That this is a law of their nature, which they can no more change than the earth can choose some other orbit; or revolve in a manner contrary to its established law. They sin by a necessity of their physical and moral constitution, as much as the



lion devours his prey, or the eagle soars, or the serpent crawls, in obedience to their natural instincts. Without consuming time, by exhibiting the fallacy of arguing by analogies drawn from inanimate or unintelligent objects and applying them to rational, moral beings, it is sufficient to show that this is a doctrine which strikes at the very foundation of all government, human and divine; therefore cannot be true. If sin be not voluntary, then of course it is not culpable; and it is the height of injustice and cruelty to hold the transgressor accountable, or subject him to punishment for crime committed against God or society: for the objection applies to one as much as to the other. If we sin because we have no power to do otherwise, who is to blame, but the Being who created us with such a nature? And if He be the author of our sin, how cruel and malignant to punish man for what God had done himself? What better justification can an individual need than such a plea as this, if it were true? A plea that makes no appeal to mercy, but simply to justice. And if it be not true, what greater insult can be offered to God than to prefer such a bold impious charge: a charge that exculpates the sinner, by inculpating God himself? It is in effect saying, "all this misery has come upon me, not by my own folly and wickedness, but by your sovereign creative power. I have not injured you, but you have injured me." Is not the very idea, when expressed in plain language, shocking to all our notions of propriety, and even opposed to our own consciousness? We know that it is not true, because we are conscious of the power of acting voluntarily. Therefore, it must of necessity close the door of hope, and steal the heart of Infinite Mercy against sentiments of pity.

God has sustained his position as a moral governor, by implanting in the hearts of his subjects a natural sense of justice, and consciousness of freedom that runs parallel to his law; responding to all the declarations of his word, "as face answereth to face in the glass." Let a man go and prowl upon society, steal and rob and murder, and then come into court and plead that he has a very sinful nature and a strong natural

pre-disposition to do these things, and see what respect would be had to his plea? The judge might reply; so had the law a strong natural pre-disposition to hang such characters. How unfortunate it would be that those two pre-dispositions should be so directly opposed to each other? I need not apply this illustration.

II. This then of course was a plea the prodigal never thought of offering: nor did he plead the strength of temptation. The idea is intimately associated with the other; yet there is a marked distinction between the two. One comes from within the heart itself, the other from without. Doubtless it was true in his case, that the fascinations of sinful pleasure, acting as they did upon a heart in love with sin presented a powerful array of temptations to his mind. Wicked men and artful women, continually plying a character naturally weak and vacillating, destitute of fixed principles, or of moral courage, could not fail to secure their object. He had left a quiet, secluded country home, inexperienced and artless. How then should he be prepared to escape all the toils and snares which were laid in his path, by those depraved creatures whose business it is to decoy souls to ruin! It seems as though he might have made out a case here if anywhere. Why then did he not offer it, at least as an extenuation of his offense?

The reason is simply because he knew better. His father might have asked what business he had in such company at all? Had he not been thoroughly warned against it? Had he not heard the Rabbis read in the Synagogue, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," and read the warnings and threatenings of God himself, as delivered by the mouth of His prophets? Or if he had been deceived and beguiled into evil company, why had he returned to their society after he had discovered their true character? These were questions which it would have been difficult for him to have answered in such a way as to make out a case. The truth is, these temptations, powerful and overwhelming as they might have been, were made so by the voluntary consent of the mind. If there were

no love for a particular sin; if it were not practised and cherished by the soul, until that propensity becomes monstrously developed, temptation would have no power over it.

To illustrate this, all the array of decanters, and glasses, and tinsel, and mirrors, and yellow tissue paper, hanging in gay festoons, that money or art can produce, would present no temptation to the temperate man. He can look at them with indifference or loathing. If the spectacle excited any emotion at all within his breast, it would be a laudable curiosity to see what effect a good-sized paving stone thrown into their midst, would produce. But the poor victim of intemperance must close his eyes, and dart past the door as he would by the house of contagion. He must not look, or hear, or smell, if he does, he is overpowered by temptation. Why this difference? Simply because one has never transgressed the law of temperance, he has no appetite; the other has cherished and practised this sin, until his thirst is more raging and intense than that of fever. If such a man continues to resort to the place where temptation meets him, and drunkards assail him, of course he must fall. The temptation is, in fact, overpowering and irresistible. But does he not sin just as voluntarily as any man, when he directs his steps toward the spot where he knows that he will be tempted?

Such is the nature of all those overpowering temptations that we plead as an excuse for sin. Instead of praying, as we are taught, "lead us not into temptation," we rush voluntarily into it, and then plead the strength of temptation as an excuse. We may amuse ourselves now with these delusions, but we shall never dare offer them to the Searcher of hearts, when we come to him seeking pardon, or when we stand before his tribunal in judgment. Simply because we know that we can resist sin if we choose. If we did not cherish and practice and love it, temptation would have no power over us.

III. He did not plead unkindness on his father's part in permitting him to go away, because he knew the proposition for leaving home had come from himself, and that his conduct had

been contrary to his father's will. There are many who are continually vexing themselves with the question, why does God, who is all-powerful, permit the human family to commit sin? Why does He not interpose effectual restraints, and thus avert all the calamities which have befallen us in consequence of transgression? As a merely speculative question this is one that is very natural for us to raise, and its solution, so far as it is practicable, throws much light upon the great principles of His government. But as a plea, or an apology for sinful acts, it is exactly tantamount to the plea of a sinful nature, because it is designed to exculpate the sinner by throwing the blame upon the ruler.

I can reply to this objection in no better way than by inquiring why you permit your child to transgress your commands? Do you ask how you are to prevent it? My answer is, in the same way that God can prevent you from sinning, destroy his freedom, shut him up and chain him down. But you reply, that this would also destroy the virtue of obedience and annihilate all those feelings of love and confidence which now exist. It would make obedience a matter of necessity, and not of choice, proceeding, as it now does, from filial love and gratitude. Exactly so. And what is true in this case is equally true in the other. A wise parent places before the mind of the child the consequences of obedience and disobedience, and leaves him to act voluntarily. If he obeys, he secures his love and the approbation of his own conscience. If he disobeys, he must abide the consequences.

This is precisely what God has done, and the only course he could adopt without destroying the freedom of his subjects and annihilating virtue from the world. And it is the course which this parent pursued toward his wayward son, and which is doubtless given us as an illustration of the great principles upon which He governs His universe. The father saw that his son was restless and discontented. He might have forbidden his leaving, or withheld from him the means of procuring sinful indulgence; but the son would have submitted with a rebellious and disobedient spirit. He would have regarded his father as



an oppressor, and would have sought in every way to vex and annoy him. Having arrived at maturity, the father thought it was better for himself, better for the son, and better for the household, that he should go and act independently. It is not probable that he went away from such a parent unwarned of the dangers that would beset his path. The language of the father would be to this effect: "You have desired to go out into the great world and act for yourself. This may be a laudable purpose, or a wicked desire, according to the course you intend to adopt. If you seek to commence business for yourself, under more favorable circumstances than are presented here, and to pursue an enterprising and industrious life, I should be sorry to interpose any obstacle in your way. But if it be merely to get away from me, and the restraining influences of home, that you may abandon yourself to all the gaieties and frivolities of a wicked world, you know well what my feelings are; though I shall have no power to prevent the consequences. My duty, as a parent, is to warn you faithfully of the dangers in your course, and then leave you to act your own choice. And while I give you the means of pursuing an honorable business, I, at the same time, afford you the means of dissipation, if you choose to pervert them. This money may be a blessing or a curse, just as you employ it. The responsibility now lies with you; mine is ended. Remember the words of Solomon: 'If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it.' I give you, also, this little book, that I have written with my own hand, containing rules by which I wish you to be governed, and advice under perplexing circumstances that may occur, when you will need the counsel of one more experienced than yourself. Moreover, and above all, I give this beautiful scroll, containing the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the proverbs of Israel's wisest king. Make this your study and your guide, and if misfortune befall you, remember that there is one who will always stand ready to befriend you." This we may suppose to be something very similar to the parting instruction which the father gave his son, as he was about to leave the parental

roof, perhaps forever. It would be a very proper course for any man to take under similar circumstances. But the point is, with what grace could that son, after he had disregarded all this counsel, had perverted and squandered all the means which he had received, and in everything done the very opposite to what he knew to be his father's will, come home and reproach his parent for permitting him to wander away, and bring this misery upon himself? I answer, with just the same grace, that the sinner can plead that God has the power, and should exercise it in restraining him from sin. Has He not done everything that we have supposed was done by this parent, or that any parent could do? Has he not told us that the very means which He gives to make us happy, may be so perverted as to be the cause of our ruin? Has He not abundantly warned us of the consequences of transgression, and even placed all along our path monuments, beacons and finger-boards, lest we should wander ignorantly from the right way? Is it not written on the page of sacred and secular history that "the wages of sin is death?" "That the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt?" Are not the retributions of his natural law operating all around us and within us, demonstrating to our eyes, and to our ears, and to our consciences, that when we sin against God we ruin our own souls? Are they not continually recoiling upon the heads of offenders, burying them beneath a mountain of iniquity which they have reared to crush others, and rolling back from one generation to another, visiting the iniquities of the fathers even upon the children? Now shall we ask why He permits us to sin, or to wander away from Him when the consequences are so clearly revealed, and the reason is so obvious? Or shall we dare to offer as a plea for transgression that God could prevent us if he would? No man's conscience will sustain him in such a position, because he practices himself upon exactly the same principle, in the government of his children, that God has adopted. And a plea that will not be sustained by the conscience of the offender will not be likely to find favor with God.

IV. But I must notice one more negative feature of the subject before I proceed to speak more particularly of the effect of his plea. He did not attempt to make terms with his father. His language in such a case would have been: "I confess that I have done wrong in wandering away and spending your money, but I now desire to repent!" Notice the form of that expression — "desire to repent! And if you will receive me as a son, and restore me again to the privileges of sonship, I will try to obey your commands."

How would such a plea, or rather negotiation, appear in his mouth? Yet it is the spirit, and in many cases the very language of those who would fain persuade themselves and others that they are penitents towards God. They often say, "If I knew that my sins were forgiven, and if I felt the enjoyment of religion in my heart, I would take up the cross and follow Christ." What is this but making conditions with God, and very hard conditions, too. It is like the man who claims his wages before he has fulfilled the terms. It is asking for the fruits of penitence and obedience while there is neither a penitent heart nor obedient spirit. It is seeking for evidence of a thing that does not exist, and cannot, while the heart is in such a frame. It is saying that if God will fill my soul with the joys of salvation, and the assurance of eternal life, I will strive to obey His commands and honor Him before the world. But if He declines this modest request, and withholds this token of His approbation, what then? Why I will continue in disobedience and seek to dishonor Him, so far as my example goes. O, what a total misconception, distortion and perversion of all the great truths of religion does a course of this kind evince! It is indicative of anything rather than a penitent spirit. The language of true penitence is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Or, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before Thee."

"Show pity, Lord, O Lord, forgive;  
Let a repenting rebel live;  
Are not thy mercies large and free?  
May not a sinner trust in Thee?"

The joys of religion are the result of holy obedience. They proceed from a "conscience void of offence toward God and man." They are the fruits of faith and love and holy principles implanted in the heart, which are to be developed and matured by the means of grace; becoming stronger and brighter as the soul approaches the scene of its exaltation, for "the path of the just is a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." None of these expedients were resorted to by the prodigal, because, as I have already remarked, he was a true penitent. He had just views of his own conduct and his father's character, and clearly perceived the position which it was proper for him to assume. It was his place to ask for mercy. His father's to prescribe the conditions upon which he should be pardoned.

All these pleas which we have considered, and many more of a similar character, are indicative of an impenitent and rebellious spirit, and can have no other effect than most deeply to offend the Being whose eye looks in and through the heart, and who knows not only its feelings but its motives. They place the soul at once in a most hopeless and desperate position, where not one promise of God's word can cheer, or one purpose of mercy can reach it. He could just as consistently pardon one of those rebel outcasts, who tremble as they believe, as to pardon one of the human race who should come to him with such sentiments in the heart. What they desire is not pardon because they have sinned against Him, not to leave off sinning because they abhor it; but pardon, that they may escape punishment. Salvation, that they may shun hell and gain heaven.

The prodigal has settled definitely in his own mind what his course should be, and as he approached the crisis of his fate, he began to feel that calmness and serenity of spirit and that dawning of hope which results from a good purpose in the process of execution. He was a convicted sinner when he saw and loathed the baseness of his conduct. A converted sinner when he arose and turned his face homeward. This was turning from sin, which is just what the term implies, *converto*, to turn from; but not an adopted son until he was received by the father and



locked in his parental embrace. Of these two states or conditions, one may be embraced in the other, yet the difference is that one is the act of the sinner himself, the other the act of the Being sinned against. Therefore it was proper to represent him as feeling that confidence and hope which results from conscious sincerity of purpose and a full determination to do all in his power to atone for his past delinquency. It was in this frame of spirit that we left him pressing forward in sight of his home, with all the associations awakened in his breast which the familiar scenes of his youth would recall.

The day had just dawned upon the eastern landscape, and the sun was shedding his beams of golden light upon the hillside. The good old patriarch stood in the door of his dwelling, looking down the winding path; and, as he gazed, he beheld a sight no doubt familiar to his eyes; it was that of a wanderer, naked and hungry, coming up to seek a morning repast at his hospitable table. He was a man of benevolence; and incidents of this kind were not so unusual as to excite his surprise. But there was something so peculiarly wretched and forlorn in the appearance of this individual, as he seemed to be hastening forward with all the eagerness his bruised and bleeding feet would permit, as to attract his attention; he says to himself, "who can he be, and what can be the reason of his haste? Perhaps it is one of our oppressed countrymen, fleeing from the pursuit of Roman soldiers, or just escaped from a Roman prison; persecuted by the hateful tyrant because of his love to his religion or his country. If it is, God forbid that I should deny him hospitality, though it cost me my life; but no, that cannot be, for he is a mere stripling, a youth—though he halts like a man of three-score. One so young cannot have been engaged in treasonable schemes. More like, he is some wild wanderer who has reduced himself to beggary by his vices; I will feed, and clothe, and counsel him, for he may have a father and mother who are mourning over his loss, as I mourn for my poor wayward boy—now dead. Yes, he must be dead; for I have heard nothing from him since the terrible famine commenced in the west, and then he was wandering about the country, destitute. O, dreadful,

that he should die thus, amid strangers, unmourned, perhaps unburied, when I would have relieved all his wants! O, my son, my son, would to God that I had died for thee." Thus soliloquizes the patriarch. But, as the stranger comes nearer, his form seems familiar, and he continues: "Possibly this may be my poor prodigal, after all; my sight grows dim, I cannot see clearly, but he appears about his size and age. The color of the hair is his. Do my old eyes deceive me, or is that the scroll I gave him at parting? Ah, I see his face now, it is my son, my lost son!" He waits not to hear his confession, or his tale of distress; he sees his misery, and knows his repentance at a glance; his heart fills with compassion; he runs and falls on his neck and kisses him; he takes the poor, ragged outcast in his arms and hugs him to his bosom, and they weep together. "Father," sobs the son, "I am not worthy to be received thus. I am not worthy to be called thy son. You know not how very wicked I have been. I only ask to be made a servant, and to dwell under your roof."

"Yes, my son, I know all; I see it all. You are wretched, but you are penitent: you shall still be my son. Take off these vile rags. Bring out a robe — the best robe — and clothe him as becomes a son of mine; and put a ring on his finger, in token of his restoration; and put shoes on his blistered feet, for this is my son; he was dead, but is alive again; he was lost, and is found. He is restored to my love, and he shall be restored to his position. None shall reproach him with his past delinquencies, for I will blot them out of the book of my remembrance, and they shall be remembered no more against him forever. And when they shall see him clothed in that pure robe, radiant with silver and precious gems, which was wrought for the marriage supper of my daughter, who shall suspect that he ever wore such garments as these?"

Every child, and we all have been children once, knows how sweet it is, after a long experience of the wretchedness of disobedience, to fall down in penitence at a parent's feet, and feel that all the guilt of transgression is forgiven. It is a blissful moment. It is the joy of pardoned sin. It is the possession

of a peaceful conscience. And precisely the same in kind, but greater in degree, is the bliss of the soul that experiences the forgiving love of God. It is the most exalted and purest happiness known this side of heaven. It is heaven begun in the soul.

Now I wish to ask, in conclusion, whether you suppose this parable is a fiction, uttered without an object, except to amuse the hearers or readers; or whether it does give a true representation of the work of repentance and salvation? The character of the Being who uttered it is, surely, enough to protect it from the charge of an idle and senseless romance, for it is in the words of One who spake as never man spake. And, if admitted to be the last, I ask you to place your finger upon a point or feature in the case that has the appearance of injustice. Tell me wherein the father departed a hair's breadth from the strictest rule of propriety, or wherein the son could have adopted a more rational course than that which he pursued when he returned, and then carry out the analogy and see wherein God has been unreasonable in his demands upon you, and what your conduct has been toward him. Some earthly parents, either from mistaken views or from the obduracy of their own hearts, would have waited and compelled the son to humble himself in the dust, and even beg the crumbs from the servants' table, before they would have forgiven such an abuse of their confidence. But a father, who had mourned over his lost son, who was anxiously watching and hoping for his return, whose heart was full of love and sympathy, would do just as this father did. His appearance was sufficient evidence of his state.

Who then are really the parties so vividly pictured to the mind? Who is the wayward child that has demanded his portion now, and who has been following the devices of his own wicked heart until misery, deep and lasting, has seized upon his soul? I say to every weary, heavy laden sinner, it is you. And who is the Being that has long mourned over your waywardness, and has been anxiously watching your return? Who is it that has sent forth His servants to proclaim that all things are ready, come unto the marriage; and that though

thousands have already come, yet there is room. Room in the provisions of the gospel, room in the Father's heart, room in the church militant, and room in the Kingdom of Heaven? Who has said, "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends?" Who has wept over sinners, saying, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, \* \* \* how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not?"

It is not an earthly father, whose affections and sympathies may change. Not an earthly king who offers to clothe you with the livery of his court, and make you an attendant on his throne. But it is the great I AM. He that liveth forever and ever. He that made you, that made the world. Yea, the heavens, also, are the works of his hands; that promises to invest you with the livery of heaven, to clothe your soul with salvation, as with a garment.

This is what God has done, and purposes as the crowning act of his love, when all his plans of mercy shall have been accomplished. But, of course, he must do it in a way consistent with his character and position. He cannot be reconciled to an individual who is charging all the guilt and misery of his life upon Himself, nor for a moment admit a plea that shall exonerate the sinner by convicting his Creator of wrong. He has no purposes of mercy for such, but will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. If justice be what they demand, justice he will give, and not mercy. But when he perceives one renouncing all these lying pretexts, and crying as David did, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." "Have mercy according to the multitude of thy tender mercies." His salvation is very near that soul.

When He beholds us in the blindness of our minds, groping our way to the mercy-seat, like the father, He sees us a great way off, and stretches out His hand to help. When he beholds us poor, and naked, and unfit to mingle in the shining ranks above, He brings forth the spotless robe, and envelops our sin-polluted souls, so that we may appear without spot, and blame-



less. All that we require, as a preparation for heaven, He supplies, and then urges the acceptance of His proffered grace. When we consider the nature of the blessings thus offered, the character and position of the Being who bestows them, is it not an infatuation, equal to insanity, to turn away and perish, miserably in sin, without repentance or a hope of heaven?

## X. THE RESTORATION.

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AND BRING HITHER THE FATTED CALF, AND KILL IT; AND LET US EAT, AND BE MERRY:  
FOR THIS MY SON WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN; HE WAS LOST, AND IS FOUND.  
I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT LIKEWISE JOY SHALL BE IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT  
REPENTETH, MORE THAN OVER NINETY AND NINE JUST PERSONS WHICH NEED NO  
REPENTANCE.—*Luke XV : 23, 24, and 7.*

I HAVE placed these two passages together because they contain substantially the same idea. They represent the joy which is felt at the recovery of anything valuable, that has been lost. The chapter contains three short parables. The first is that of a man who had a hundred sheep, and, having lost one, rejoiced more at its recovery, than over the ninety and nine. Then to show the application, the Saviour adds: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." The second is that of the woman who had ten pieces of silver, and having lost one, is represented as rejoicing more at its recovery than over all her remaining treasures. Then follows very nearly the same expression: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And finally we have the more elaborate allegory of the Prodigal Son, closing with a general demonstration of joy on the part of the household at his restoration. We may notice here that the elder brother reproaches the father, with evincing greater affection toward a wild and undutiful son than he manifested for one who had always been obedient to his commands; and for making a greater demonstration of joy, than was consistent with the character he had maintained. He does not seem to have taken into consideration the fact that the father rejoiced, not because his son had devoured his living with harlots; but because he had abandoned his evil ways and returned to a life of virtue.

It is often remarked of parents, who are so unfortunate as to have children of this character, that they seem to possess a greater love for them than for those who have never transgressed; but the remark is unjust. It is only the peculiar circumstances of the case that awaken emotions and call forth sympathies, which are not manifested in ordinary cases. A man may be the parent of two children; one may amuse him by his childish drolleries, the other excite his pride by the developments of dawning genius; thus they each have their peculiar traits of character. He is pleased with one for one quality, and with the other for its opposite; but so far as the affections of his heart are concerned, one occupies no larger space there than the other. He is conscious of no difference, and they discover none; but let either one of them be laid upon a bed of sickness and suffering; let the case become alarming so that he trembles for the result, and he will hang over the pillow of the little sufferer with breathless anxiety; every sympathy and affection of the heart will seem to be absorbed in that particular child. One would scarcely think he had another. Now every person can perceive, that it is the suffering that is experienced, and the danger to which the child is exposed, which produces a development of feeling on the part of the parent, that otherwise would be uncalled for. This too is the reason why parents sometimes seem to be so much concerned for a wayward and disobedient child, as to make the impression on the minds of others, that their attachment is even stronger toward such a one than for those who constitute the real joy of their hearts and are the comfort of their lives.

In this case, while the father was in that ecstasy of delight which was natural at the recovery of his lost child, the elder son felt that this extravagant demonstration of joy was an evidence that his own services and obedience were not appreciated. Jealousy began to rankle in his heart, and he turned away from the scene of rejoicing with feelings of disgust. He could not understand or appreciate the feelings of the father, upon such an occasion.

There is much in this part of the parable which is put in merely to give coloring and consistency to the whole picture, and for this reason needs no particular explanation. But it is generally supposed that the conduct of the elder son, in manifesting an unwillingness that his outcast brother should be restored to equal privileges with himself, was intended as a reproof to the Jews, who were continually murmuring because the Saviour preached that salvation was for the Gentiles as well as for themselves. The main feature in the subject is, the complete restoration of the wanderer, and the joy of the household at his return, together with the affiliated truth, that there is joy in heaven over a repentant sinner.

I. The father might have pardoned his penitent child, and still left him in a miserable, degraded condition. Pardon does not necessarily imply restoration. An executive may pardon a criminal for a disgraceful crime; but that act will not restore him to the place in society that he had occupied before he transgressed. There is a stigma attached to his character, and a loss of confidence not easily regained. Hence the whole gospel plan is one designed, not merely to secure pardon to the penitent, or, in other words, to avert the penalty of the law; but to restore him to the place which he would have occupied had he never sinned. The term used as expressive of this idea is justification. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And again: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." "That being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." These, and various similar passages, show that the work of redemption is something more complete and comprehensive in its designs, than simply to avert the consequences of transgression. It takes the sinner entirely out of the hands of the law, and accounts him as righteous in the sight of God; through the righteousness of the Divine Head to whom he



becomes united by faith as one of the members of his spiritual body. This figure illustrates both his relation to Christ and the ground of his justification. Restoration is implied in the idea of justification. If a man is justified; found not to be guilty; or accounted as innocent, of course he is not deprived of any of his rights or privileges; or if he has been, they are bound to be restored to him.

This then implies first, that the sinner is restored to the affections of God, and that God loves him, as he does an angel that has never sinned.

Second. It implies that he is restored to His confidence. God immediately lays upon him duties, in which His own honor is concerned. The extension and glory of His earthly kingdom, are, in one sense, committed to his keeping. And He holds him responsible for the manner in which he discharges his trust.

Third. It implies that the image of God is restored in his heart, and that he will ultimately attain to that exalted state of perfection and happiness which he would have possessed, had he never lost his position by transgression. All the wreck and ruin of sin will be repaired, all its traces obliterated, and in heaven he will wear as pure a robe as those spotless beings who have never known the contamination of sin. All this is beautifully illustrated in the reception of the prodigal, where he is immediately clothed, not as a menial, but as a son, and where it is distinctly intimated, that he is to be regarded by the household as restored to all the privileges of sonship.

When we read that there was a feast made, and that the sound of rejoicing was heard, echoing through the halls of the paternal mansion, the question naturally suggests itself, who were the guests? Who were assembled there to congratulate the parties, thus unexpectedly restored to each other? The father on the return of his lost son, and the son on his happy change of circumstances. Evidently, they must have been the friends of the father; those who could sympathize with him in his present feelings, and who could rejoice that his child had escaped death, and from those snares and vices, which would end in something worse than mere physical death. They are

precisely the same class as those who rejoice on earth, and are said to rejoice in heaven, when one sinner is converted. Those who love God and love His kingdom, and love all His holy intelligent universe, therefore rejoice when a being, endowed with immortality, like themselves, ceases to pervert the end of his creation by dishonoring his Maker, and covering himself with infamy, and unites with them in honoring and praising and adoring the Great Sovereign of heaven and earth.

II. We have here disclosed then the great fact, that the beings of the heavenly world sympathize with us. This is not a doctrine learned only by obscure hints, or forced inferences; but it is one of the first and last truths recorded in the history of creation and redemption. When the world was created for the abode of man, and fitted up as the theatre for the most astonishing development of infinite mercy, they looked with delightful interest on the scene. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" not merely that He had afforded another evidence of His wisdom and power, in ordering and arranging a world of beauty; but that He had created a new order of spiritual beings, like themselves, capable of loving, adoring and serving a common Sovereign. So through the entire history of our world, whether God designed blessings or judgment upon the human race, his angels have been ministers to accomplish his pleasure.

When the Son of God descended to our world, in order to accomplish His errand of mercy, an innumerable multitude of these holy beings escorted Him to the confines of earth, and were heard praising God for this exhibition of His love, shouting, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will toward man." And at the winding up of all things, angels, we are told, will be commissioned to gather the elect from "one end of the heavens to the other," and will attend at the tribunal of judgment to witness and execute the decision of the great day. These are a few of the instances specified in sacred history, in which they have been concerned in the administration of human affairs. But these events are of such magnitude that

there is nothing strange in the circumstance that angels should be interested in their accomplishment. It seems fitting that they should be the attendants of the Saviour to the earth ; and wait, poised on their swift wings, over the place where he should rise, to escort, with songs of triumph, the Prince of Glory, after having conquered death and the grave, back to his heavenly throne. But when, as in the text, we are taught that the salvation of one sinner is a subject of rejoicing in the presence of God himself, we can hardly comprehend why so insignificant and sinful a creature should be an object of regard to them. This is, undoubtedly, because we cannot estimate the value of the soul as they can. We do not understand its nature and powers as they do, nor can we conceive of the degree of exaltation to which it may attain in a spiritual and holy state.

Having noticed, briefly, the fact that God and angels do sympathize with us in our present condition, I proceed to give some reasons why they rejoice when one sinner is brought to repentance.

1. Because they know more of the nature and consequences of sin than we do. We see only its development on a scale where it is necessarily limited and counterbalanced by much that is good. God has not given up the world entirely to the dominion of Satan, but he still overrules and thwarts his machinations, permitting him to carry his schemes only to a certain fixed limit, which he cannot pass. And this we may rationally suppose to be just sufficient to demonstrate to us its true character and tendency. We notice much of its destructive influence ; we see what desolation it has wrought, but our observation is as nothing when compared with theirs. They beheld the first act of rebellion, when Satan exalted *himself* against God :

“ And with ambitious aim  
Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
Raised impious war in Heaven, and battle proud,  
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power  
Hurled headlong, flaming, from the ethereal sky ;  
With hideous ruin and combustion, down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell,  
In adamant chains and penal fire,  
Who durst defy Omnipotent to arms.”

They saw, in the progress of ages, another order of beings created in the image of God, only one degree removed from themselves, and the newly created spirit, for a temporary purpose, put into a beautiful structure, the most perfect work of Infinite Wisdom; where it was to develop its powers and its character, and then, perhaps, be translated and changed into a spiritual body, without sickness or death, or disorganization. This they saw, filled with pain and loathsome disease, and finally laid grim and ghastly in death.

The world, which God had arranged to be the abode of beauty and happiness, they had seen desolated by war, and famine, and pestilence, and filled with extortion, oppression and human woe in every conceivable form; until sighs, and groans, and prayers were continually ascending, as a cloud of anguish, up to Heaven for pity and relief. Nor was this all. They had seen, what we only read of, as the ultimate consequences of transgression. They know how wide that impassible gulf is which separated Dives from Lazarus. And how intensely black that cloud is which rolls up, eternally, from the bottomless pit. They view sin, not only as it is directed against the majesty of God, but they behold its consequences as they recoil upon the head of the transgressor. And with such knowledge of its nature, and its certain results, they cannot fail to rejoice when an immortal being escapes the awful consequences of experiencing its utmost power.

2. Angels rejoice when one sinner is brought to repentance, because they understand the nature and value of the soul. This we cannot comprehend in our present state. We have some faint idea of a spiritual existence and of immortality; but it is not sufficiently definite to affect our conduct materially. We still live, as though this were the end of our being, and everything valuable to the soul was concentrated in this world, to be enjoyed during the few moments of time. We witness the development of the soul under great disadvantages, cumbered and clogged by a material body, the seat of many wicked passions that are trammeling its powers and sullyng its purity. A few years of expansion is all that we behold, and then its



powers, or rather their manifestation, is obscured by the decay of the earthly tabernacle, and it disappears from our view; gone to a more congenial sphere, where it may rise and expand without limit.

Who then can comprehend the degree of elevation and perfection which it may attain, when freed from all these corrupting influences; when the universe is open to its researches, and eternity made the only limit to its expansion? As the creation of a single particle of matter in a century would eventually form a world, or a universe, so eternity will exalt the feeblest intellect, or the budding germ of the infant mind to a point of greatness above our conception. From what we know of the law of intellectual progress, we may rationally conclude that the infant who has just looked into our world with the natural eye, and then closed it forever, is eventually elevated above the brightest luminary that has ever shed forth its intellectual light in the academic grove, or from the philosopher's porch.

All these things the angels have observed, while we only infer them from discovered laws, or receive them as an act of religious faith. What a shocking sight it must be to them, when they behold a soul endowed with such faculties and powers, shutting itself out from its own proper sphere, where God designed that it should be ever advancing in knowledge, happiness and holiness, and preparing for itself a bed of misery, in which it must lie in ignorance and wretchedness forever! No wonder that they rejoice over one soul saved when they so well know its worth.

3. Angels rejoice when one sinner repents, because God has made it the condition of salvation. Repentance is not atonement; nor a reparation for the injury done by sin. God has not required this of us; if he had, the harps of angels would never vibrate with the notes of salvation over the recovery of sinful beings. This is a reparation to law, and a satisfaction of justice, which God has provided for in another way. But repentance is an experience necessary to the soul itself, as well as becoming the position of one who seeks for pardon at the hand of the Being sinned against. The parent requires it of

his child ; the executive, of the criminal, and the sovereign, of the rebellious subject ; and for the same reason, God demands it of the sinner, as a condition of pardon. The system of vicarious atonement has not altered or subverted any of those eternal principles which exist in the very nature of things. The satisfaction which Christ has made to public justice only enables God to pardon those to whom pardon may be safely granted, and to restore those, who as penitent, will strengthen and uphold His government, and who, without this provision of mercy, could not be saved any more than the obdurate. None of the Divine attributes are changed since the rebel angels were cast forth from Heaven, or the first guilty pair expelled from Eden. The angel still guards the gate of paradise, with his flaming sword, excluding all that is unholy and impure. It would be the height of absurdity to suppose, that because God has sustained the dignity of his own character by a sacrifice to public justice, therefore he can demand nothing of individual transgressors as the terms of their pardon ! and that, by this scheme, he has so tied up his own hands, that his creatures may go on in rebellion, setting his authority at defiance ; and he be bound by this act to restore them to his love and confidence, and to a place in his heavenly kingdom. Angels, instead of rejoicing at this, might well remonstrate against such a scheme as subversive of all law, as annihilating the distinction between virtue and vice, sin and holiness, and breaking down the barriers between heaven and hell. Yet many are building their hopes of heaven on a scheme that would make angels weep rather than rejoice. Many who possess abundant means of obtaining correct views upon the relations which these two subjects sustain to each other, are living under the delusion that the atonement of Christ is in some way to affect their situation favorably, whether they regard the conditions upon which it promises salvation, or not ; or, that it will be a sufficient act of penitence to cry, " God be merciful to me a sinner," at the hour of death, and that God is bound by a sort of self-imposed necessity to hear their prayer. But such a God is not the Being who swept the earth by flood, and wiped out the pollutions of

Sodom by fire, or opened its capacious jaws to crush a rebel troop; but the creature of a crazed imagination. Doubtless there were prolonged and piteous cries for mercy and shrieks of anguish, when the heavens were pouring out their fury upon that generation of sinners; but their day of mercy had passed, and God in righteous indignation had taken the sword of vengeance in His hand.

They rejoice when a sinner is sincerely penitent, because that implies two things which are necessary as a qualification for heaven. One is, that the mind clearly perceives the error of the course pursued, and the nature of the injury done; the other is a firm resolution to abandon sin. Now it is evident that unless the mind has undergone this kind of experience, and is prepared in future to sustain the authority of God, the individual is not a proper subject of clemency, or worthy of restoration to his love and confidence. He must be prepared to admit the justice of the divine government, so that whether worlds are created or destroyed; whether souls are elevated or cast down to hell, he is able to say with angels, Hallelujah, the Lord Omnipotent reigneth; though clouds and darkness are round about his throne, yet righteousness and truth have their habitation there! This is an experience not only fitting the relation of the sinner to the Being sinned against, but one absolutely necessary to the future happiness of the soul. A correct understanding of the important subject will show that all holy beings are deeply interested in maintaining these principles, because if they were abandoned, God could not sustain his government, or afford protection to the virtuous. It would not make the transgressor happy; but it would destroy whatever of happiness now exists; it would not change hell into heaven, but it would make the universe one universal hell!

Angels rejoice, then, when one sinner repents, because the only obstacle in the way of salvation is removed. When they see a heart beginning to soften, and a soul that has long resisted the appeals of Infinite love, uttering feebly the prayer of penitence, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee," they know that the only barrier in the way of

mercy is broken down, and that it will be washed in the laver of regeneration, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and ultimately admitted into that bright circle who worship around the throne, and to sing the same praises, and engage in the same holy pursuits with themselves.

If what has been advanced upon this subject be true, we perceive, first, that the salvation of one soul is of more consequence than a material world. God regards it so, because it costs Him more. When He created all things, it was by the word of His power, or, in the sublime language of inspiration, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." But the redemption of our race cost him such a sacrifice as none but God could make, and the same sacrifice that was necessary for the whole human family, was equally necessary for the salvation of a single individual. He has taught us, in various ways, that the material universe is of no consequence to Him, only as it is subservient to the interest and happiness of immortal beings and is made a theatre for the grandest development of His wisdom and mercy; for when this great purpose is accomplished, it will at once be disorganized by the disruption of its own restrained elements, and roll again in the darkness of chaos, hissing and smoking in its track, a fearful monument of Infinite power. Nor have we any evidence that angels regard with interest the discoveries which the human mind is continually making of the power and utility of natural agents; or the changes which the face of nature is constantly undergoing by the application of these agents. They are subjects of interest to weak material beings whose knowledge is restricted to a narrow sphere. But we have evidence that they feel the deepest interest in everything which affects the spiritual condition of the soul, and secures honor and glory to the Redeemer of mankind. Yea, the world of nature may smile, and the flowers of spring exhale their sweetest fragrance, and the warblers of the woods fill the air with their richest notes, and God may regard, with benignity, the perfection of His own skill, yet the world was not created for them, but they were created for the happiness of man; and there is nothing in the



universe, animate or inanimate, that he really delights in, but the incense of a pure heart, the love and praise of rational beings.

Second. The salvation of the soul is of more consequence to the individual than the possession of a world, because, if that is lost, then all is lost. Therefore, the two are put in opposition, and the proposition announced: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" This is a question that no man has ever attempted to answer, except as God has answered it; yet many, very many, have lost their souls for a piece of this world so small that the least perceptible dot on the map would be an exaggerated representation of their earthly possessions. And, small as it is, how short the time they are allowed to possess it! Think of it, ye rational beings! A soul, priceless beyond computation, because immortal, bartered for a fraction of this world too minute to be expressed, and that only leased for a few years! We may shrink from this kind of proposition, if we will; but that does not change its truth. We may put a veil before our eyes, and strenuously refuse to look to future probabilities or contingencies: we may even screen ourselves under the admitted doctrine that the future is known only to God; yet we do know that the time is not distant when the honors of the world will fade on the withered brow of the warrior; when the worldling will cry in despairing accents, "how is the gold waxed dim, and the most fine gold changed;" when these beautiful fields and spreading lawns and waving forests will fade from the sight; and all these monuments of pride and skill, which now form the habitation of the body, will moulder in ruins, and the world, with all its mighty attractions, be at an end. Then, of what consequence will all these be to you, if but one soul is lost, and that should be yourself?

We are also taught in this subject, at least inferentially, that the Church of God in heaven and on earth is one—one in spirit and one in object. What is the design of all these means of grace, these prayers, these sermons, these songs of praise and thanksgiving which ascend from the earthly sanctuary, unless it be the salvation of souls and the glory of the Redeemer?

And is it not the same theme that occupies the thoughts and inspires the songs of angels, when they rejoice over a single repentant sinner? It is a delightful thought, when the Christian permits his spirit to be carried away with its holy inspiration, for him to know that he has associated with him such beings as these, and that the same blessed spirits who once labored and prayed with us on earth are bending with sympathy over the scene of their former struggles and toils, or are singing in heaven for joy when one and another wandering sinner is brought home to God. What a thrill of ecstasy must the mother feel when the child which she left reluctantly, because it was so wayward and thoughtless, is seen, with a penitent heart, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Who can assert with confidence that these parents, and wives, and brothers, and sisters are not ministering spirits, that are commissioned to watch over those whom they have left behind? for, says Paul, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
To come to succor us, that succor want!  
How do they with golden pinions cleave  
The yielding skies, like flying pursuivants  
Against foul fiends, to aid us militant!  
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,  
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;  
And all for love and nothing for reward;  
O, why should heavenly God to man have such regard?"

Then why should the Church of God ever despair? Why should we hang our harps upon the willows, and sit down in gloomy despondency over our forsaken condition, when we have leagued with us such a mighty host as this, powerful with man and powerful with God.

Third. We perceive, then, how the humblest individual may become more distinguished than the conqueror of a world. For angels have no sympathy, or interest in conquests of blood, unless it be to look with pity upon the millions who are sent to their final doom, and with sympathy upon the thousands who weep over their unhappy fate. These convulsions, which

have filled the world with joy or sorrow, and the nations with weeping and mirth, have occasioned no joy in heaven. But one of you, the humblest child that hears me, can rejoice the hearts of the friends of God on earth, if with a penitent soul you come to Him seeking pardon ; and waiting angels will wing their swift flight to heaven, to proclaim the victory you have achieved. And there will be joy in heaven "that the dead is alive again and the lost is found." May we not hope, yea, reasonably expect, that this great and glorious truth will awaken new thoughts and implant new resolutions in some hitherto vacillating and undecided mind?

















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